

# Oral Health News

A Newsletter for The Center for Oral Health

February, 2009

## From The Editor

In this issue of Oral Health News, I'll discuss the prioritization of dental care, in an effort to prevent the development of more serious problems, while surviving the current economic realities.



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## NEXT ISSUE:

In the next issue of Oral Health News, I will examine the current state of dental implants including the advantages, the special considerations and the economic realities

## A Bad Economy

### Should Not Produce a Bad Dental Decision

2.6 million jobs were lost in 2008. Citigroup's stock dropped 78% since September, 2008. The S & P 500 dropped 48% since the fall of 2008. Homes are being lost daily. Businesses are closing. Jobs are at risk. So, where does dental care fit into this dismal economic climate? Obviously, everyone's situation is different. Therefore, the answer to this question will vary from person to person. But, there are a few fundamental guidelines which may help one to decide the best treatment approach in connection to dental care during a stressful economic climate.

Dental care can be roughly subdivided into three groups: emergency problems, sub-acute or chronic conditions and routine preventative care. In an effort to help you make appropriate decisions during these difficult economic times, outlined below are the three divisions of dental care with brief discussions describing the degree of urgency in connection to each level of care.

#### Emergency Problems:

Emergency dental problems include a number of oral conditions. Swelling, acute pain, broken teeth and seriously painful jaw joints are among the more common problems which occur. Typically, discomfort or disfigurement prompts one to seek relief rather quickly. The choice to delay treatment is seldom an option. But some treatment options are better than others. I will try to provide a few guidelines which may help you to make the right choices in connection to emergency problems.

Swelling is typically a sign of acute inflammation or infection. Acute inflammation is the body's response to an invading irritant. Treatment involves identifying the site of the irritant and removing it. Infection is a growth of microbes in the body. Treatment often involves cleaning the infection and may include using drugs to slow the growth of the invading agent.

Acute dental pain is usually caused by an inflamed or infected tooth nerve. This can sometimes be treated by removing decay and placing a sedative filling. Once the nerve calms down, it can then be restored permanently. Tooth nerve infections usually require a root canal or an extraction. Which treatment is best depends on whether or not the tooth is restorable, how healthy the tooth is periodontally and whether or not the tooth has an opposing tooth.

Occasionally, one or both jaw joints become very painful. This problem is usually muscle pain and it is often initiated by a misalignment of the upper and lower jaws due to abnormal tooth position. Treatment typically involves adjusting the biting surfaces of the teeth so the fit is better. It may also include constructing a night guard to prevent damage from clenching or grinding.

# the Center For ORAL HEALTH

Gum Care ■ Oral Medicine ■ Dental Implants

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## Staff Corner

Take a look around. You may have noticed that there are a couple of relatively fresh faces around the office. We also have a returning face. We are pleased to welcome Laurie to our front desk, and Darlene to our clinical staff. We are also thrilled that Kathy has come back home! Laurie has a very interesting story. She has three (yes, three!) Saint Bernard dogs. They are therapy dogs and she takes them to visit school children and nursing home patients. Darlene comes from a fashion background, and Kathy has continued to assist in other dental offices, but missed our patients, and couldn't wait to come back.

As always, Josephine and Rosellen look forward to providing you with excellent care, while Sue, Marcia and Nancy are always happy to assist you with scheduling your appointments, submitting your insurance claims and many other of your administrative needs.

### *Economic Considerations Continued.*

Broken or lost teeth are only emergencies when associated with pain or swelling. But when a broken or lost tooth occurs in the esthetic (front) zone, most people feel compelled to correct the problem in some way. Usually, a fractured tooth can be corrected with a filling or a temporary crown. A missing tooth can be replaced temporarily with a removable appliance or sometimes with a non-removable appliance. These often take a few days or a few weeks to construct.

### Sub-acute or Chronic Conditions:

Sub-acute or chronic dental problems include missing teeth in non-esthetic zones, sensitive teeth, loose teeth, discolored teeth, lost fillings, gum pockets and clicking or popping jaw joints. These problems, while requiring care, do not require urgent care, and, if necessary, can be deferred for a short while. The critical issue in this regard is to determine how severe the problem really is. If it is about to progress into a more serious problem, the need to manage the problem demands more immediate attention.

### Routine Preventative Care:

Routine preventative care (dental cleaning) should often be given priority over sub-acute or chronic problems. This is because routine dental care is designed to keep bacteria and irritants from accumulating on the teeth and in the gum pockets. This treatment can often help to stabilize a patient's dental condition until the less pressing problems can be handled. During this procedure, unrecognized problems can often be found and analyzed. This permits emerging acute problems from becoming more serious and more expensive than necessary.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

**The Center for Oral Health** provides a number of specialized services. **Periodontal Therapy** deals with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the gums and supporting bone. **Dental Implants** involve the

placement of titanium anchors into the jaw to replace missing teeth. **Oral Medicine** is the diagnosis and treatment of conditions of the mouth and surrounding structures which have a medical link.

Got a question? Email us at - [oralhealth@optonline.com](mailto:oralhealth@optonline.com)