

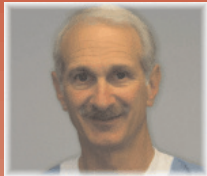
Oral Health News

A Newsletter from The Center for Oral Health

November, 2009

From The Editor

In this issue of Oral Health News, I'll describe some new information which helps explain the reason why gum disease and systemic diseases seem to be linked.



Robert A. Hersh DDS

NEXT ISSUE:

In the February, 2010 edition of Oral Health News, I will explore some concepts in esthetic as they relate to teeth and gums.

INFLAMMATION

The Root of All Evil

In the past decade, there has been an explosion of research examining the connection between oral disease, primarily periodontal disease, and a wide array of systemic diseases. Heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, premature births and arthritis are just some of the conditions statistically linked to periodontal disease. But while the statistical evidence continues to accumulate connecting gum disease with systemic diseases, the mechanism explaining the link has been more elusive.

Recently, medical-dental researchers believe they may have found a significant part of the answer. It is connected to an overall increase in inflammation within the body. Inflammation is a body's protective response to tissue injury or a foreign body invasion. If you have ever gotten a bee sting, splinter or a burn, you have experienced an inflammatory response. After getting a splinter in your finger, you typically see the area get red, swollen, warm and painful. These are all external signs of an inflammatory reaction. Once the body identifies a site of injury or foreign invasion, a cascade of events begins. These include increased blood flow to the site, increased concentration of white blood cells and "attack enzymes," in the site, walling off the problem from the rest of the body and, if all proceeds well, clearing of the irritant or finally healing of the injury. This process has been fairly well understood for many years.

What has not been well understood however, is that during an inflammatory reaction, a large amount of inflammatory elements are released into the general circulation. If the insult or injury is temporary, so is the increase in circulating inflammatory elements. However, if the insult or injury is repeated over and over again, the overall concentration of inflammatory elements remains persistently high. The most common form of periodontal disease is actually a long-standing, painless infection in the gum which, over time, causes the bone and soft tissue around the teeth to degenerate. It is believed, however, that this chronic infection continually provokes the body's immune system to release inflammatory elements into the general circulation, for as long as the gum disease persists untreated.

The inflammatory elements have names like interleukin, cytokine, leukotriene and tumor necrosis factor. The names are not important for this discussion, but what these elements do is critical to the story. Inflammatory elements are believed to be involved in the creation of, and continued development of coronary artery disease. They are, as well, believed to be contributory to stroke formation. They are believed to interfere with normal blood sugar regulation. They are believed to be

the Center For ORAL HEALTH

Gum Care ■ Oral Medicine ■ Dental Implants

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Staff Corner

Here at the Center, we have another new face among us. Maureen is our most recent addition to our staff. She is a Registered Dental Assistant and brings much experience to our office. She is also an avid gardener, home decorator and, I have been told, an excellent baker. Darlene, our previous Dental Assistant, has recently left us for an office that was closer to her home. She was also an excellent baker and is surely missed.

Some things haven't changed. As always, Laurie, Sue and Nancy are here to help you with any scheduling and insurance issues that you may face, while Josephine and Danielle look forward to giving you a pearly white smile!

Inflammation Continued.

contributory to the higher incidence of premature, low birth weight babies. They may be involved with the development of cancer, arthritis, lung disease - in short many, if not most, major illnesses. The precise role played by gum disease in the overall health picture is not yet clear. But the evidence is mounting that the reduction in inflammation in any site may decrease the disease potential in many other sites of the body.

So, start using those proxybrushes which have been gathering dust in the top desk drawer since your last cleaning. It's a lot easier than cardiac rehab!

Center Stage

Although Dr. Hersh's presidential duties are finally over, he still seems to find a way to eat industrial strength chicken a few nights a week. Most recently, he spoke before the Mercer County Dental Society. the topic, no surprise, was the connection between gum disease and heart disease. He recently assumed the chairmanship of the New Jersey Dental Association's Committee on Communications. He has already learned how to fritter with Twitter! Between tweets, he found time to attend the American Academy of Periodontology in Boston. He reports that the nation's periodontists seem to be getting younger and smarter!

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.

Have a question? Email us at oralhealth@optonline.net