



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

JUNE 2023 CCSS: Clinical Updates to Optimize Patient Outcomes in Primary Care

S01: Vital Considerations in Oral Hygiene: Bridging the Dental-Medical Divide

Resource List

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is projected to be the third cause of death in 2030, however standardized screening protocols are not adopted in the general population. The authors of [Screening for COPD in primary care, involving dentists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, nurses and general practitioners \(the UNANIME pilot study\)](#) (2021) conducted a study to assess the impact of COPD screening with a variety of health care professionals. Participants completed a questionnaire, performed a spirometry and received counseling, including smoking cessation and chest physician referral. The pilot study suggested that a predefined screening of COPD by professionals in primary care could be implemented. These professionals included general practitioners, dentists, pharmacists, physiotherapists and nurses.

Compromised nutritional intake due to eating disorder related behaviors, such as binge eating and purging, can lead to multi-system medical complications, including an irreversible impact on oral health. However, dental anxiety, fear or embarrassment may hinder individuals with an eating disorder from seeking assistance for their oral health concerns. As key health professionals in eating disorder treatment, dietitians are well positioned to provide basic dental screening, however, their capacity to perform this role in practice has not been established. The aim of [Eating disorders and oral health: a scoping review on the roles of dietitians](#) (2020) was to identify current evidence on the role of dietitians in promoting oral health among individuals with eating disorders.

Dental public health is a field of public health and a specialized field of dentistry that focuses on improving access to oral health care and understanding the factors that contribute to improving oral health from a population health perspective. [Addressing Oral Health Inequities, Access to Care, Knowledge, and Behaviors](#) (2021) discusses a collection of articles in *Preventing Chronic Disease*, "Oral Health Behaviors and Availability of Dental Services Among Children and Adults." It identifies contemporary dental public health challenges and opportunities, including inequities in access to dental care, disparities in the prevalence of oral disease risk behaviors related to oral disease and the relationship between oral health and chronic diseases. The article also reviews the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on oral health.

Studies have investigated the relationships between chronic systemic and dental conditions, but it remains unclear how such knowledge can be used in clinical practice. In the article [Current Knowledge on Correlations Between Highly Prevalent Dental Conditions and Chronic Diseases: An Umbrella Review](#) (2019), the authors provide an overview of existing systematic reviews, identifying and evaluating the most frequently reported dental-chronic disease correlations and common risk factors. This systematic review of articles between 1995 and 2017 focused on three most prevalent dental conditions and ten chronic systemic diseases with the highest burden of disease in Germany.

Populations disproportionately affected by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) are also at higher risk for oral diseases and experience oral health and oral health care disparities at higher rates. The article [Oral Health and COVID-19: Increasing the Need for Prevention and Access](#) (2020) reviews how COVID-19 has led to closure and reduced hours of dental practices except for emergency and urgent services,



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limiting routine care and prevention. The pandemic offers an opportunity for the dental profession to shift more toward nonaerosolizing, prevention-centric approaches to care and away from surgical interventions. Regulatory barrier changes to oral health care access during the pandemic could have a favorable impact if sustained into the future.

[A cross-sectional analysis of oral health care spending over the life span in commercial- and Medicaid-insured populations](#) (2022) is an article wherein the authors conducted analysis comparing data from a Medicaid Database and a Dental Commercial and Medicare Supplemental Database. The analysis compared per enrollee spending on fee-for-service dental claims and medical spending on oral health care for patients from ages 0 through 89 years. Striking differences in the timing, impact and severity of caries, periodontal disease and oral cancer are seen between those enrolled in Medicaid and commercial dental plans, among other findings.



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