

Grand Rounds Inspires the Future

By Lyle Hoyt †

On July 25th, Casey Hein, Chief Editor of *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™*, testified before the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Advisory Board for Interdisciplinary Community-Based Linkages regarding the connection between oral health and systemic health. This advisory board is comprised of professionals representing medicine, dentistry, nursing, dental hygiene, and other allied health disciplines. Expert testimony is used to provide recommendations to the DHHS Secretary and Congress related to appropriations, guidelines, and best practices for federally supported interdisciplinary community-based education/training programs involving all health and allied health professions. Hein's presentation highlighted the important data supporting the suspected relationship between periodontal disease and systemic diseases, the need for all health professions to embrace transdisciplinary models for prevention/comprehensive patient management, and the role of *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™*



Left to right: Casey Hein, BSDH, MBA, JoAnn Gurenlian, RDH, PhD, and Tom Meyers of America's Health Insurance Plans.

in providing information to practitioners bridging the gap between the latest information and clinical care. Hein was assisted in her presentation by Dr. Joanne Gurenlian, who discussed a new interdisciplinary nursing/hygienist model for preventive dental care in nursing home settings that has been described for the first time by Coleman, Hein and Gurenlian in this issue of *Grand Rounds*. Additionally, Hein was able to secure the participation of Tom Meyers, of America's Health Insurance Plans, to deliver a follow-up presentation which discussed how some insurance companies have begun to change their approach to reimbursement for preventive dental care. These new reimbursement considerations are based on recent data indicating that periodontal treatment and maintenance may reduce overall healthcare expenditures associated with chronic inflammatory diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular/cerebrovascular disease. New models for preventive dental coverage also extend to high-risk groups that include pregnancy. The DHHS advisory board was impressed with the presentations and is currently considering recommendations that may lead to federal support of interdisciplinary education/training programs that address the periodontal-systemic connection and demonstration projects that provide innovative models for comprehensive preventive care or data regarding healthcare economics impact.

The significance of this event for the dental profession cannot be overemphasized. The potential availability of federal funds to support development of education/training programs and pilot projects is certainly a desirable outcome. More importantly however, the invitation for Hein to testify before this advisory board provides necessary exposure to validate the periodontal-systemic connection. The federal government and the insurance industry are now beginning to recognize the importance of the periodontal-systemic connection. The acceptance of *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™* by other health and allied health professionals provides important visibility for the role of the dental profession in overall health and quality of life. The dental profession must be ready and able to respond to the almost certain demand for increased collaboration that will characterize future community-based transdisciplinary/comprehensive care models.

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