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OPPORTUNITIES MAXIMIZED OR MISSED?

Without question, the last decade of research in oral-systemic medicine has provided us with extraordinary scientific findings. Yet, as once stated, “Scientific study that is not translated and used in daily practice ultimately is wasted.”¹ To that end, ensuring that important scientific study such as oral-systemic medicine is translated for adoption into daily practice is no small challenge. In fact, it has been estimated that it takes about 20 years for findings of new research or novel technologies to be fully adopted and implemented into the health-care system. Our experiences mirror the reality of that statement. In discussions with practitioners from around the country, the area of education which is most consistently cited as being inadequate is oral-systemic medicine and its implementation. “Just tell us what to do with this information...” characterizes the feedback from readers and those who attend continuing-education courses. And this is where we started. The impetus behind this new editorial concept called *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™* was our mutual pursuit of a reliable mechanism to transfer the findings of credible research of oral-systemic medicine into mainstream dentistry. We thank PennWell for supporting our vision.

One of the many compelling statements made in the Surgeon General’s Report on *Oral Health in America* was the following, “...the concept of oral health as secondary and separate from general health is deeply engrained in American consciousness, and hence may be the pivotal and most difficult barrier to overcome.”² Overcoming this hurdle requires refocusing the public’s attention on the importance of oral health, but first providers of dental and medical care must believe this message themselves. Our hope is that *Grand Rounds* will be a catalyst to move mainstream dentistry and medicine towards greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of oral health in maintaining systemic health. Dental practitioners have an unprecedented opportunity to join our medical colleagues to advance novel health promotion, disease prevention, and disease management strategies, all of which have the potential to significantly alter the disease trajectory of many serious chronic diseases and conditions. The truth is providers of medical and dental care are both entrusted with the systemic health of their patients. Those health-care professionals who do not recognize this body of emerging science called oral-systemic medicine will miss a valuable window of opportunity for therapeutic intervention.

The need to change nondental health-care providers’ perception of the importance of oral health was also discussed in *Oral Health in America*.³ The Surgeon General challenged medical and dental health-care providers that they “should be ready, willing, and able to work in collaboration to provide optimal health care for their patients,” and employ more targeted intervention strategies for those at high risk.³ *Grand Rounds* proposes to meet this challenge by circulating the journal not only to dentists and dental hygienists but to a group of 10,000 physicians and nurses (2006) and delivering innovative editorial dedicated to:

- Compelling members of the dental and medical communities to embrace the growing body of science called oral-systemic medicine and accept the uncertainty of its ongoing evolution.
- Translating/transferring credible and relevant scientific findings and scholarly thought related to oral-systemic medicine into authoritative editorial that is educational and engages all sectors of the health-care professions.
- Stimulating collaboration and innovative thinking on how to transcend professional boundaries to integrate clinical protocols that include application of oral-systemic medicine in everyday patient care.

To help build collaborative models of care with the medical community, a number of highly respected medical specialists have joined what some have called a “world class advisory board” for *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™*. It goes

without saying that we are very honored that so many of the icons in research, education, and private practice could see the same vision, and were willing to offer their expertise in advancing this important editorial mission. It is important to note that the most serious responsibility members of the advisory board have is to ensure the scientific integrity of the publication by preventing incorrect or over-reaching statements on research findings.

Grand Rounds has been created as a peer-reviewed, quarterly publication with each issue dedicated to an area of oral-systemic medicine which has relevance to specific disease relationships. In this inaugural issue, the relationship of periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease is discussed. Dr. Maria Ryan's guest editorial is a wonderful way to jump-start this new publication. A synoptic review of the literature, co-authored by Gapski and Cobb, provide readers with the "bottom line" regarding the state of the research related to the relationship between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease. Shanies and Hein provide a cardiologist's and dental hygienist's perspective on the importance of ensuring periodontal wellness in cardiology, offering reassurance to readers that cardiologists may indeed be starting to look at the threat of periodontal disease a little differently.

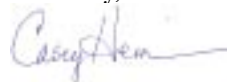
The article that proposes strategies for dental hygienist and nurse collaboration in targeting periodontal and cardiovascular diseases will challenge the paradigms of those within both dentistry and medicine — and that is precisely what is meant to happen in *Grand Rounds*. In an editorial about inflammation, atherosclerosis, and ischemic events published in 1997 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Maseri wrote: "... it is easier to study the details of accepted paradigms than it is to develop new hypotheses, just as it was easier to map the visible face of the moon than it was to explore its hidden side." Likewise, we gain nothing by denying the exploration of a new paradigm and refusing to consider its potential in health promotion and disease prevention.

The implementation tools we have included in this inaugural issue are helpful in the application of this body of knowledge. In this issue and future issues, readers will be provided material for patient education and highly relevant information to establish dentists' communication with physicians regarding at-risk patients.

Given the input of a multitude of individuals within dentistry and medicine — from education, clinical research, and private practice — there seems to be no end to the subjects we have been asked to address in future issues of *Grand Rounds*. A complimentary, fully digitized edition of this journal is available at www.thesystemiclink.com, which extends the access of *Grand Rounds* to clinicians and educators around the world. The second issue is devoted to the discussion of the bi-directional relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes.

Each encounter we have with a patient is an important window of opportunity. This includes an opportunity to promote a healthy lifestyle, an opportunity to educate a patient about risk factors for oral and systemic diseases, or an opportunity to get a whole family in treatment. This window also includes an opportunity to refer a patient to a risk-reduction program or to triage a patient to a specialist for treatment of a chronic condition that may increase risk for other diseases or amplify existing conditions. Some practitioners won't see this as a window of opportunity. As a result, an opportunity to deliver high-quality care will be missed. At the point of care, the choice is ours. Our hope is that *Grand Rounds* will help dental and medical professionals maximize the opportunity to integrate important oral-systemic medicine into everyday patient care — an opportunity that none of us should miss.

Sincerely,



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