



Dental-Medical Collaboration in Caring for the Oral-Systemic Health of Nursing Home Residents

- What is the magnitude of the unmet needs for dental care in older populations – how are we ‘dropping the ball’ on caring for this high-risk group?
- How might untreated periodontal disease predispose nursing home residents to life-threatening diseases?
- How can all healthcare providers—including dental professionals—contribute to the well-being of nursing home residents through screenings and treatments for oral-systemic issues?

In the past several decades, medical and nursing communities have seen a wealth of scientific evidence that supports the important role of oral health in sustaining overall health and well-being. But we have been slow to adopt standards for collaborative care between medicine and dentistry to implement this science.

Given the prevalence of periodontal disease and caries in older populations (most of which goes undiagnosed), it is reasonable to assume that most people entering nursing homes have untreated periodontal disease and decayed teeth.

Poor oral health places older adults at greater risk for malnutrition. Furthermore, periodontal disease increases the risk for inflammatory-driven diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, aspiration pneumonia, complications of diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. These diseases are the most prevalent in nursing homes and are costly to treat.

This course proposes protocols for nursing homes that fosters a collaborative practice arrangement between nurses and dental hygienists.



Suggested Audience: Dental hygienists, dentists, nurses, physicians, and other non-dental healthcare providers

Suggested Length: 2-3 hours



LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the unmet needs for dental care in older populations, the prevalence of periodontal disease and caries in this at-risk group and how these oral diseases compromise the health of older adults
- Implement bi-lateral, point-of-care screening and referral of older people with dental diseases, and related inflammatory-driven diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes
- Describe how nurse-dental hygienist transdisciplinary collaboration could improve health outcomes in nursing home residents

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