

The Awakening: Depression in Us and in Our Patients

- Can you help patients who are depressed?
- Is there an easy way to identify patients who might be depressed?
- How do we address depression in members of the dental team?

With one in six people experiencing depression some time in their lives, it's likely that during a typical day, we will see a number of patients whose lives have been touched by depression. Prolonged depression can be devastating — impacting both physical and emotional health, including increased risk for alcohol or drug addiction, trouble with school or work, problems with relationships, social isolation, excess weight gain, self-mutilation, and suicide. A recent model that utilized dentists and dental hygienists to intercept patients with depression, was overwhelmingly successful when recently piloted in the Indian Health Services.

This course begins with a brief overview of the most common types of depression and associated risk factors. The PHQ-2 tool will be introduced to provide a simple way to preliminarily screen for depression. Complications common to patients with depression, homecare regimens for their unique dental needs, and key messages for patient education will be discussed. We'll also tackle the 'elephant in the room'— depression in members of the dental team. We must care for ourselves before we can care for our patients. Please join us for this important and long overdue course.



Suggested Audience: Dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, front desk staff
Suggested Length: 2-3 hours



LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify risk factors for depression, and utilize the PHQ-2 screening tool to recognize patients who may be depressed and refer them to physicians or behavioral health providers for formal diagnosis
- Describe the connection between depression and poor overall health and how depression may increase the risk for caries and periodontal diseases
- Prescribe homecare products that help prevent caries, xerostomia and other complications common in patients with depression
- List key messages to educate patients about how to maintain oral health
- Recognize daily challenges that dental professionals face; assess personal mental well-being and if appropriate, buffer work-related stress, and address risk factors for depression specific to personal and professional life

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