A new framework for a more sustainable oral health system

Three Domain Framework might be the future of dentistry

By DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement Staff

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the nation’s broken oral health care system, it has created an opportunity for the industry to move toward a new, more sustainable model centered around the patient, primary care and prevention. The DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement released a report in late October — based on the work of the Community Oral Health Transformation Initiative learning community — that establishes a primary care-like structure for oral health care delivery, facilitates value-based payment models and enables patients to invest in their own oral health.

One hundred twenty of the industry’s most prominent organizations and leaders contributed to the development of the Three Domain Framework, which lays out a clear path for providers and practices to expand access to care, improve health outcomes and reduce the cost burdens associated with poor quality of life because of oral disease.

The framework gives patients and dental and medical providers the freedom to collaborate on treatment plans that work best for a given situation within the context of overall health. It emphasizes patient and provider safety while addressing critical gaps in both patients’ access to care and providers’ financial viability.

“Oral health is directly linked to overall health, but our current system doesn’t reflect that reality,” said Dr. Sean Boynes, vice president of health improvement for the DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement. “And COVID-19 has shined a bright spotlight on this flaw. The Three Domain Framework, which lays out a clear path for providers and practices to expand access to care, improve health outcomes and reduce the cost burdens associated with poor quality of life because of oral disease.”

The Three Domain Framework might be the future of dentistry.

The three domains can be adopted in any order, meaning the care team can determine where to begin. Providers can begin shifting models of dentistry by starting in a domain that supports their unique needs and those of their patients.

**Domain One: Advancements in teledentistry**

The pandemic has increased interest in and utilization of teledentistry, but widespread adoption requires defining new treatment codes and rethinking the flow of care for a variety of dental visits.

Domain One focuses on the identification, development and adoption of telehealth strategies and builds an accessible evidence-based virtual delivery approach specific to oral health that can enhance disease prevention and whole-person health.

**Domain Two: Prioritization of minimally invasive care**

The pandemic also sparked interest in minimally invasive care (MIC), as providers sought treatment methods, such as sealants and silver diamine fluoride, that limit aerosols and the spread of COVID-19. MIC can reverse or slow early disease stages using a program of anticipatory guidance and collaborative decision-making with patients. Domain Two prioritizes the use of MIC for oral health management and maintenance.

**Domain Three: Integration and personalization of oral care delivery**

Domain Three outlines an integrated care approach personalized for each patient, using risk stratification, care coordination, specialty referrals and predictive analytics that can prolong the health of the mouth from the tissue to the bone. Poor systemic health can lead to deterioration of oral health, and poor oral health can lead to systemic health complications. This domain addresses both sides of that coin, relying on evidence-based practices to enhance a person’s overall health.

In the coming months, the DentaQuest Partnership and other framework contributors will work to engage a broader set oral health care providers, payors and stakeholders to pilot and implement elements of each of the domains.

“A strong, sustainable health system is built on prevention, value and equity,” said Dr. David Krol, vice president for health initiatives at the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut. “The Three Domain Framework, with its primary care approach, patient-centered focus and evidence-based foundation, provides the framework for increased alignment of the dental and medical communities in our shared quest for improved health outcomes for all.”


The list of national organizations contributing to the development of the Three Domain Framework is here.

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**See FRAMEWORK, page C2**
Barrier protection critical with gloves

While caring for their patients, dental and health care professionals are constantly exposed to bodily fluids that may carry viruses and other infectious agents. It is critical the gloves these professionals use provide the best possible barrier protection, especially today.

Many types of gloves are available, but it is important to know that not all gloves have the same barrier capability, depending on the type of material used. For example, natural rubber latex gloves have long been acknowledged for their very effective barrier properties, while non-latex gloves, such as vinyl (polyvinyl chloride), have inferior barrier capability as shown by numerous studies.

Quality, safety top priorities
Other synthetic gloves, such as nitrile and polysoprene, perform much better than vinyl but are more costly, especially polysoprene gloves.

Using gloves with inferior capability could expose both the patient and user to harmful infections.

Malaysia is the world’s largest medical gloves exporter (latex and nitrile). Both quality and users’ safety are of top priority to the nation’s glove industry. To this end, a quality certification program (the Standard Malaysian Glove, or the SMG) has currently been formulated for latex examination gloves.

Stringent technical specifications
All SMG-certified gloves must comply with stringent technical specifications to ensure the gloves are high in barrier effectiveness, low in protein and low in allergy risks, in addition to having excellent comfort, fit and durability — qualities that manufacturers of many synthetic gloves are trying to achieve.

Latex gloves are green products, derived from a natural and sustainable resource, and are environmentally friendly. (You can learn more by visiting www.smgonline.biz or www.latexgloves.info).

The use of low-protein, powder-free gloves has been demonstrated by many independent hospital studies to markedly reduce the incidence of latex sensitization and allergic reactions in workplaces.

More important, latex-allergic individuals donning non-latex gloves can now work alongside their coworkers wearing the improved low-protein gloves without any heightened allergy concern. However, for latex-allergic individuals, it is still important they use appropriate non-latex gloves, such as quality nitrile and polysoprene gloves, which provide them with effective barrier protection.

Extensive array of brand, prices
Selecting the right gloves should be an educated consideration to enhance safety for both patients and users. For decades, gloves made in Malaysia have been synonymous with quality and excellence, and they are widely available in an extensive array of brands, features and prices. Dental gloves can be sourced either factory direct (www.mrepc.com/marketplace) or from established dental products distributors in the United States and Canada.

(Source: MREPC)
When it comes to Protection

Quality makes the Difference

Stringent infection prevention and control plays a critical role in dental care.

The use of quality dental gloves is indispensable in protecting both dental care providers and their patients since many dental procedures involve saliva, blood, mucous and other body fluid which are potentially infectious.

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USA OFFICE
3516 International Court, NW
Washington DC 20008 USA

tel: +1 (202) 572 9771/9721
fax: +1 (202) 572 9787

e-mail: usa@myrubbercouncil.com

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