Medical-dental health links continue to build

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

New evidence shows improvements in oral health can have a positive impact on reducing atherosclerosis, or plaque, in arteries.

The science behind why a diseased mouth puts one at a higher risk for numerous systemic diseases, such as heart attack, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and some forms of cancer, continues to build.

As more dentists and physicians become aware of how this affects their patient’s general health and medical condition, they and the public’s expectations of the role their dentist plays in health will likely shift.

“Almost a hundred years ago there were a few dentists and physicians who were very forward thinking who postulated that dental disease could actually impact general health,” said Dr. James McNally, CEO of Big Case Marketing, a marketing and case acceptance consulting firm for dentists with advanced clinical care practices.

“Unfortunately, at that time, quackery in medicine and dentistry was being fought, and valid lines of questioning were rejected instead of being fought, and valid lines of questioning were rejected instead of being fought,” McNally said.

“Furthermore,” he said, “by approaching medicine as a whole body disease, worse than is generally thought, can lead to doctors and other professionals to recognize that there are links between the mouth and the entire body.”

McAnally offered his remarks during an interview about the role of the dentist and heart health with Dr. Dean Vafiadis, a New York-based periodontist, on New York City Cosmos radio FM 91.5 WNYE.

“In our current environment, thanks to professional rigidity and failure to change the existing standards of care rapidly, regardless of the science, most dental schools and state dental licensing boards are artificially slowing the progress of advances in understanding of disease relationships from benefiting the general population’s health,” McNally said.

Vafiadis, McAnally and many other dentists are on the forefront of making the information needed in front of the lay public so they can be informed as to what they should be hearing from their local dentist.

“The recent report out of Case Western University that a doctor found the exact same strain of bacteria from a 55-year-old California woman’s infected gums in her still-born baby serves as a vivid example of a direct systemic infection resulting from an oral infection,” McNally said.

“While that makes for good headlines, the headline that isn’t being put out there is the literal millions of dollars lost through the years due to what has been explored, delaying the study of what relationships were present between the mouth and entire body.”

McAnally said.

“Secondly, as dental patients become more familiar with their oral cavity, it will stimulate them to receive treatment more quickly.

“Conducting your own inspection of patients’ oral cavities provides the perfect opportunity to mention that this is something they can easily do themselves as well.

“You can explain the procedure in brief and then let them know about the Web site, www.oralcancerselfexam.com, that can provide them with all the details they need.

“If dental professionals do not take the lead in the fight against oral cancer, who will?”

“Thus, no other medical professionals are in a better position to show patients that they are committed to detecting and treating oral cancer.”

“Prove to your patients just how committed you are to fighting this disease by signing up to be listed at www.oralcancerselfexam.com.

“This new Web site was developed for consumers in order to show them how to do self-examinations for oral cancer.

“Self-examination can help your patients to detect abnormalities or incipient oral cancer lesions early.

“Early detection in the fight against cancer is crucial and a primary benefit in encouraging your patients to engage in self-examinations.

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“And in the eyes of our patients, they likely would not expect anyone else to do so — would you?”