Clinical

How hygienists can support patients’ overall body health

Use the power of cross coding

By Marianne Harper

Have you lost the excitement? Are you content with what you might now perceive as the same-old, same-old every day? Day after day you may be performing hygiene procedures over and over again, all the while knowing you are helping your patients but perhaps you simply don’t feel as though you are truly making a significant difference in their overall health. If you feel that level of frustration, or even if you don’t, but you are interested in advancing your career, then read on to discover some ways in which you can make a significant difference in the health of your patients.

As you are aware, dentistry is becoming recognized as a medical discipline. We in the dental field are in a unique position to inquire about their health. If your practice is not familiar with recare update forms, it is an efficient way to inquire about their health. If your practice is not familiar with recare update forms, it is an efficient way to inquire about their health.

Update recare forms

Hygienists can be key players in this opportunity. By thoroughly questioning new patients and by providing and reviewing medical history forms that are updated with the most current medical questions, hygienists can begin an evaluation of their patients’ medical state.

In addition, our established patients may have had a change in their medical history since their last appointment, so a recare update form is an efficient way to inquire about their health. If your practice is not familiar with recare update forms, it is an efficient way to inquire about their health.

Embrace it: Help your patients navigate orthodontics with ease

Between 1982 and 2008, the number of people getting braces in the U.S. increased by 99 percent, according to the American Association of Orthodontists. This dramatic growth has resulted in a large number of patients looking for information to prepare for orthodontic treatment and guide them through the often challenging process. To address this growing need, Crest and Oral-B have launched Embrace It! (www.embraceit.com), a complete online resource for parents and patients preparing for or maintaining braces.

Embrace It! helps answer braces-related questions, including: what to expect, how to re-establish proper oral care techniques, how to brush and floss with braces including simple education tools to guide proper use and produce results that exceed expectations. With OrthoEssentials, patients can steer clear of common problems such as gingivitis, tartar and demineralization, which can result in additional time and expense — and get the most beautiful and healthy smile possible.

For patients in the tween age group particularly, getting braces is the perfect time to re-establish proper oral care techniques and routines to inspire confidence in having a healthy smile. To help tween patients through this awkward phase, Crest and Oral-B have updated their line of tween-friendly Pro-Health FOR ME oral care products to include the Oral-B Pro-Health FOR ME Electric Powered Toothbrush. With a built-in two-minute timer and multiple brush heads for sensitive teeth and gums, this enables patients to power the gunk away — something orthodontist can appreciate.

For more information on Embrace It!, you can visit www.embraceit.com. To learn all about OrthoEssentials and Crest and Oral-B Pro-Health FOR ME products, visit www.dentalcare.com.

(Source: Crest and Oral-B)

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Embrace It! (www.embraceit.com) is a complete online resource for parents and patients preparing for or maintaining braces. Photo/Provided by Crest Oral-B

Fig. 1: Example photocopy of CMS-1500 health insurance claim for treatment of sleep apnea, medically necessary dental procedure that qualifies for coverage through health insurance. Fig. 2: Blank, original CMS-1500 form, which is printed in red ink, provides spaces for at least four diagnosis codes and six procedure codes. Codes within these code systems provide further diagnostic information or details on why a procedure might have been modified. The complexity serves as a fair warning that cross coding is not an easy system to implement.

Marianne Harper is the CEO of The Art of Practice Management. Her areas of expertise include revenue and collection systems, business office systems and the training of dental practices in dental/medical cross coding. Harper is a well-respected consultant, trainer, lecturer and author.

Her published works include “CrossWalking — A Guide Through the Cross Walk of Dental to Medical Coding” and her “Abra-Code-Dabra” series on medical cross coding for sleep apnea, TMD and trauma procedures.

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As a recent article on [www.dental-tribune.com] points out, there are some safety issues with hand-held X-ray units made in China and Korea, as well as elsewhere outside of the United States. There are two sources of radiation from an X-ray system — leakage radiation from the X-ray tube and scattered radiation from the patient. The leakage radiation is minimized by placing highly absorbing material, such as lead, around the X-ray tube. The major issue with the hand-held X-ray units is the scattered radiation, that is X-rays that are scattered from the patient towards the operator.

In fact, about 20 to 30 percent of the X-rays are scattered from the patient toward the person holding the device. The X-ray units from outside the United States, which are under FDA scrutiny, do not provide any protection from X-rays scattered from the patient. These systems look like a large camera that you hold with both hands. There is no shielding provided by these hand-held systems, that is, the user’s hands are exposed to all of the X-rays scattered from the patient. Consequently, the user’s hands are going to receive a radiation dose that will probably exceed the radiation-protection limits for skin and extremities. Therefore, these units should not be hand-held.

We evaluated one hand-held X-ray unit manufactured in the United States (Nomad, Aribex Inc) and compared staff doses with those for the same staff using conventional wall-mounted systems prior to acquiring the hand-held systems (Gray et al. 2012). This hand-held system uses a proprietary shielding material around the X-ray tube, resulting in leakage radiation levels that are virtually imperceptible. In addition, it has an integral lead-acrylic shield that protects the user from radiation scattered from the patient. The results of our study indicated that the user’s hands received lower radiation doses than they did when they were using conventional wall-mounted X-ray systems.

Buyers should be aware that not all hand-held X-ray systems are created equal and not all of those being sold on the web have been reviewed by the FDA. Hand-held X-ray units should have sufficient shielding to minimize leakage radiation from the X-ray tube and an integral shield to protect from radiation scattered from the patient.

By Joel Gray, PhD

As you can see, these tests cover many possible systemic conditions. Your practice will have to determine which staff members are allowed to administer these tests, because your state may make a difference in your career.

Thus, dental-medical cross coding is a cutting-edge insurance system whereby dental practices can file a patient’s medically necessary dental procedures with their medical plans.

Tell us what you think!

Do you have general comments or criticism you would like to share? Is there a particular topic you would like to see an article about in Hygiene Tribune? Let us know by e-mailing feedback@dental-tribune.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

If you would like to make any change to your subscription (name, address or to opt out) please send us an e-mail at database@dental-tribune.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

John Hinman, Aribex is an exhibitor at the Hinman Booth No. 923.
Dental practices should be cross coding for the following:
- Trauma procedures
- Oral surgical procedures
- TMJ procedures
- Sleep apnea procedures
- Medically necessary endodontic procedures
- Medically necessary implant and periodontal procedures
- Exams, radiographs and diagnostic procedures for any medically necessary dental procedure

Positive changes to your career
Between implementing disease testing and cross coding, a hygienist will significantly make positive changes to his or her career. These hygienists will not only help patients obtain optimal health, but they can also help make procedures more affordable. Patients will be able to see that their dental practice truly cares about their health and will have more confidence in the practice. This is a true win-win situation. The dental practice will value the contributions of these hygienists, and hygienists will rarely face each day with that "same-old, same-old" feeling.

References