Mental experts are urging dentists and physicians to work closer together in a bid to improve and understand patient health.

The news follows the latest clinical evidence from a new report which examines the association between periodontitis and systemic conditions.

A UK group of cardiologists, endocrinology and periodontology experts found a potential link between periodontitis and increased likelihood of CVD. They also discovered that periodontitis is also often more severe in subjects with diabetes mellitus - a group already at increased risk for cardiovascular events.

The Potential Impact of Periodontal Disease on General Health represents the first time a broad group of UK experts has convened to explore the growing body of research into this important area.

On reading the report, Dr Tony Jenner, deputy chief dental officer for England, said: 'The Department of Health (DoH) launched Delivering Better Oral Health—A evidence-based toolkit for prevention in September 2007. This document intended for use throughout dental care and as a guide to helping reduce the burden of CVD and diabetes.'

Periodontitis has attracted much interest as a potential risk factor not only for cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and diabetes, but also for its association with adverse pregnancy outcomes, respiratory disease, kidney disease and certain cancers.

The interaction of oral health and general health has been recognised in the dental profession for a long time, but doctors especially those in general practice do not recognise the link.

This could change with a recent expert report published in Current Medical Research and Opinion, which examined the potential link between oral hygiene, associated gum disease and other systemic diseases involving inflammatory processes such as CVD and diabetes.

The authors conclude that while doctors and dentists are encouraged in the report to educate patients on the importance of maintaining a healthy mouth for the sake of their general health.

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