Excellent Oral Health for ALL Virginians

** Have a Wonderful Holiday! **

November 2013 Newsletter

Oral Health in Virginia Legislature

The Virginia Oral Health Coalition closely monitors legislation in the Commonwealth to ensure that new and existing policies support access to oral health services and reinforce the relationship between oral health and overall health.

Of note, the Joint Commission on Health Care, in response to its study of the cost of untreated dental disease, recently voted on several policy options (pg. 24), as a result the Commission will:

- Introduce a budget amendment to expand preventive dental benefits for pregnant woman enrolled in Medicaid*;
- and,
- Study the dental capacity and educational priorities of Virginia’s oral health safety net providers.

*This option was proposed by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, William Hazel, Jr., MD.

There are several ways that you can impact oral health access during the upcoming legislative session.

Webinar: Preview of General Assembly 2014

Join the Coalition's Preview of General Assembly 2014 webinar on Wednesday, December 18 at 10:00 a.m. The webinar will include a review of the Governor's budget, a Medicaid expansion update, and additional opportunities to expand dental benefits for underserved populations.

To RSVP for the webinar, email Samantha by Friday, December 13.

2014 Oral Health Legislative Day

Join Coalition staff, board members and partners at the Virginia General Assembly the morning of Wednesday, January 29, 2014, to speak to your legislators about oral health. This is an excellent
Students practice drilling teeth.

Coalition board chair Dr. Tegwyn Brickhouse and vice chair Robin Haldiman recently co-authored an article for *Pediatrics* based on a partnership formed between VCU School of Dentistry and CHIP of Roanoke Valley.

VCU dental students, in partnership with area dentists, provided oral health education and fluoride varnish through CHIP’s home visiting program - the result was an increase in the number of children with a dental home.

Physician assistant (PA) students at Roanoke’s Jefferson College of Health Sciences are gaining more than just medical training. Thanks to academic coordinator Sara Nicely, MPAS, PA-C, PA students are now exposed to a formal oral health curriculum, presented by medical and dental providers and a pharmacist. As a result, program graduates will provide oral health services to nearly 3,000 patients each week - a number that will grow as more graduates enter the workforce.

Among many key skills, the curriculum will teach students how regular dental treatment can help manage diabetes and how incorporating oral health services in a well baby visit may keep children out of the operating room for dental care.

Ms. Nicely says her involvement in the Coalition’s medical and dental collaboration initiative sparked her to incorporate the oral health curriculum and to plan her doctoral dissertation around the impact of the curriculum on future medical providers.

**Of Interest**

**Oral Health and Overall Health**

Oral health and overall health are fundamentally intertwined. The following links present current information on how oral health is connected to overall health and well-being.

- [HPV and Oropharyngeal Cancer](#)
- [Oral Bacteria as "Fingerprint"](#)
- [Tooth Brushing and Heart Disease Prevention](#)
- [Alzheimer’s and Oral Health](#) (see third bullet)

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Early Childhood Caries Cause of Most Canadian Preschoolers'
Surgeries

The Canadian Institute for Health Information has found that 19,000 surgeries are performed each year on children younger than six to treat early childhood caries (cavities) - a preventable disease. Nearly all (99.6 percent) were performed under general anesthesia at a cost of over $21 million Canadian.

Read the full article from Dr. Bicuspid

Colocating RDHs into Medical Practices - A Feasibility Study

A group of researchers recently tested the feasibility of colocating registered dental hygienists (RDHs) into medical practices. The results showed that colocating the RDHs in medical practices is feasible and is an innovative model to provide preventive oral health services to disadvantaged children.

Read the abstract from Journal of Public Health Dentistry

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