



## Integration Care Model: Chronic Disease

Regular dental care and treatment can help lower blood sugar, decrease the risk of heart attack, and support substance use disorder treatments[12]. Care integration means medical and dental providers design comprehensive treatment plans that address a patient's total health experience.

### Factors to Consider

- Educating Providers:** Patients with chronic disease present an opportunity for care teams to learn how oral health can impact other systems and illnesses in the body. Share data, research, and continuing education opportunities with all clinical and administrative staff; co-located medical and dental offices can open lines of communication through all-staff meetings and patient-centered care teams.
- Technology as a Tool:** Sharing electronic health records (EHRs) between providers' offices can be challenging, given the different types of EHR software. Providers can still share data like a blood pressure reading or an oral health risk assessment, through paper forms, a case worker or community health worker, or an electronic clinical summary.
- Measuring Improvement:** Consider both qualitative and quantitative measurements to assess your integration plan's success, like well-managed blood sugar among persons with diabetes, successful periodontal treatment in patients with chronic disease, relapse or employability among patients undergoing substance use disorder treatment, patient satisfaction, and a reduction in ventilator-associated pneumonia.

**\$2,840**

Average amount saved by treating periodontal disease in patients with diabetes



### Case Study: Staff Education

An urban clinic with co-located medical and dental services sought to lower their diabetic patients' A1C levels through increased dental care. Initially, however, the clinic's dedicated medical team was reluctant and quite emotional about adding another task to their regimen and feared overburdening their busy staff. Clinic leadership used in-person meetings, education, patient outcomes data, and medical research to demonstrate the links between oral health and diabetes to clinical providers. Through active listening and open lines of communication, the clinic was able to engage its clinicians in a plan to refer diabetic patients to their onsite dentist. By beginning with open communication and staff education, the clinic created buy-in among all staff and implemented a program that provides more comprehensive care to their patients.



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## Practical Examples: Tracking Outcomes

Dentist improves chronic disease management and measure patient outcomes.

- 1** When Ann sees the dentist at the local community health center, she completes an intake form that asks about her medical conditions. Ann checks that she has diabetes and lists her medications.
- 2** Next, a dental hygienist takes Ann's blood pressure and pulse. Using motivational interviewing techniques, the hygienist discovers Ann's blood sugar is uncontrolled which has resulted in several recent trips to the emergency department (ED). Ann also says she cannot afford diabetic testing supplies, and she doesn't feel safe exercising outdoors.
- 3** Ann's dentist sees signs of gum disease, and he discusses with Ann how periodontal disease can worsen her diabetes and make her blood sugar harder to control.
- 4** Ann's dentist designs a treatment plan and tracks her periodontal treatment in Ann's EHR; her dentist receives updates on Ann's blood sugar from the center's physician through a shared EHR and shares the dental treatment notes with the physician.
- 5** After the appointment, the hygienist walks Ann to the care management office where they help her identify community resources that can provide low cost blood sugar testing kits. They also remind her of the clinic's partnership with the YMCA where she can use the indoor track to walk safely for exercise.
- 6** Together, Ann and her providers better manage her diabetes with dental treatment and wrap-around services that help take Ann better care of herself day-to-day. Ann's health improves, her long-term care costs are reduced, and she spends less time in the ED.

