Let’s hear it for hygienists!

San Francisco practice makes house calls

In a society where expert medical care seems ever more elusive and impersonal, the last thing you might expect is a dental practice that makes house calls. However, Bay Area House Call Dentists (BAHCD), based in San Francisco, has built a thriving practice around visiting their patients where they live.

Rather than serve the well to do, BAHCD specializes in helping some of the Bay Area’s least-served populations: the elderly, the housebound and the infirm. BAHCD is a service of the Blende Dental Group, headed by Dr. David Blende, a practitioner with more than 20 years of experience providing comprehensive dental care and a leader in the field of dental surgery.

“We serve not only people with disabilities, which is what people think of when they think of special needs, but also people with severe phobias and complex medical conditions,” explained Dr. Cheryl Elacio, director of house call services and geriatric services for BAHCD. “Basically anyone who is not a good candidate for a traditional dental office for either physical, emotional or cognitive reasons.”

BAHCD patients may include a child with autism, a senior with Alzheimer’s disease, an obese or otherwise immobile individual or someone who’s simply too scared to set foot in a dentist’s office. These are people who regularly go without dental care because their caretakers are unable to get them to a dentist, and because dental problems, unless accompanied by acute pain, often go diagnosed.

During their house calls, BAHCD practitioners take X-rays, perform cleanings, identify gum disease, prescribe medicines, remove infected teeth, identify and sometimes fix poorly fitting dentures and determine effective courses for longer term comprehensive treatment where needed.

Because of the flexible design of

The health complications of being overweight, such as increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers, have long been reported. Health care professionals often urge patients to manage their weight and strive to get physical exercise each day to achieve and maintain overall health.

And now, researchers have uncovered another benefit of maintaining a fit lifestyle: healthy teeth and gums.

In a study published in the August

Another reason to stay in shape

Crest Oral-B will recognize five deserving dental hygienists who go above and beyond the call of duty on a daily basis. Nominated by their peers, these professionals truly make an impact on patients and the oral health cause.

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issue of the Journal of Periodontol- ogy, researchers found that patients who maintained a healthy weight and had high levels of physical fitness had a lower incidence of severe periodontitis. Using body mass index (BMI) and percent body fat as a measure of weight control, and maximal oxygen consumption (VO2max) as a measure of physical fitness, researchers compared sub- jects’ weight and fitness variables with the results of a periodontal examination. Those with the lowest BMI and highest levels of fitness had significantly lower rates of severe periodontitis.

Periodontitis, or gum disease, is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the supporting bone and tissues around the teeth. Gum disease is a major cause of tooth loss in adults, and research has suggested that gum disease is associated with other diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Samuel Low, DDS, MS, associate dean and professor of periodontol- ogy at the University of Florida Col- lege of Dentistry, and president of the American Academy of Periodon- tology (AAP), says that research con- necting overall health and periodon- tal health should motivate people to maintain a healthy weight and get enough physical fitness.

“Research continues to demon- strate that our overall health and oral health are connected,” says Dr. Low. “Weight management and physical fitness both contribute to overall health; and now we believe staying in shape may help lower your risk of developing gum disease. Since gum disease is related to other diseases, such as cardiovascular dis- ease and diabetes, there is even more reason to take care of yourself through diet and exercise.”

Low also encourages comprehen- sive periodontal care through daily tooth brushing and flossing, and routine visits to a dental professional, such as a periodontist, a specialist in the diagnosis, treatment, and pre- vention of gum disease.

(Source: American Academy of Periodontology)