Gum disease a significant public health concern

The prevalence of periodontal disease in the United States may be significantly higher than originally estimated. Research published in the Journal of Dental Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) suggests that the prevalence of periodontal disease may have been underestimated by as much as 50 percent. The implication is that more American adults may suffer from moderate to severe gum disease than previously thought.

In a National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) pilot study, funded by the CDC’s Division of Oral Health, a full-mouth, comprehensive periodontal examination was conducted on over 450 adults over the age of 55. Periodontal disease was classified according to definitions determined by the CDC in collaboration with the AAP.

The prevalence rates were then compared against the results of previous NHANES studies, which used a partial-mouth periodontal examination. Historically, NHANES has served as the main source for determining prevalence of periodontal disease in U.S. adults. The pilot study finds that the original partial-mouth study methodology may have underestimated true disease prevalence by up to 50 percent.

Several research studies have associated gum disease with other chronic inflammatory diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and rheumatoid arthritis.

“This study shows that periodontal disease is a bigger problem than we all thought. It is a call to action for anyone who cares about his or her oral health,” said Samuel Low, DDS, MS, associate dean and professor of periodontology at the University of Florida College of Dentistry and president of the AAP.

“Given what we know about the relationship between gum disease and other diseases, taking care of your oral health isn’t just about a pretty smile. It has bigger implications for overall health, and is therefore a more significant public health problem,” Low added.

Low explained that the increased prevalence of periodontal disease makes it essential to maintain healthy teeth and gums. “Not only should you

ADA conference seeks solutions for older adults

The American Dental Association (ADA) is extending invitations to those concerned about the oral health of vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities to attend a national conference and help shape the future of oral health care for this underserved and growing population.

The national coalition conference, titled Oral Health of Vulnerable Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities, is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 18, at the JW Marriott in Washington, D.C.

“We look upon this conference as the first step in building a consensus among a multi-disciplinary group of professionals in seeking solutions about oral health care for the vulnerable older adult and the disabled,” said Dr. Raymond F. Gist, ADA president.

“We are looking for attendees’ ideas, collaboration and support in

Oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) is the most common malignancy of the oral cavity and has several known variants. The papillary variant of OSCC affecting the palate is rare compared to more common sites of involvement that include the larynx, pharynx and nasopharynx.
Asthmatic kids and tooth decay

In the past, there have been suggestions that asthma and tooth decay were linked, especially for children. But according to a new report from the American Dental Association, that is apparently not the case. A critical review of the literature examined 27 separate studies published in 29 different papers between 1976 and March 2010.

The studies looked into possible connections between asthma and dental caries, and it was found that children with asthma appear to have fewer cavities. "The studies showed that there is no clear evidence of a connection between asthma and tooth decay," said Gerardo Maupomé, a professor of Preventive and Community Dentistry at the University of Indiana School of Dentistry and the lead author of the study. "We found little evidence to suggest that asthma causes tooth decay. In fact, the two largest studies we reviewed found that children with asthma appear to have fewer cavities than others. This may be because their parents are used to taking them to health-care providers and routinely bring them to the dentist."

"The study does not show a direct link between asthma and tooth decay," said Dr. Rella Christensen, a former president of the American Dental Association. "But it is important to remember that children with asthma are at risk for developing cavities because of the large number of factors related to asthma, including the high rate of treatments for the illness and the severity of asthma symptoms. Yet, researchers suggest there is no need for parents with asthmatic children to be concerned. However, children who use nebulizers to control their asthma may be more likely to have poorly managed asthma, which may be because their parents are used to taking them to health-care providers and routinely bring them to the dentist."

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