ADA apology reinforces diversity commitment

The American Dental Association (ADA) recently acknowledged that it deeply regrets not taking a stronger stand against discriminatory membership practices during the pre-civil rights era.

ADA President Raymond Gist, DDS, said making the announcement public reinforces the ADA’s commitment to a diverse and inclusive profession, moving us forward in a new spirit of collaboration to advance the dental profession and the oral health of the public.

“In looking forward, we also must look back,” stated Gist, the first African American to serve as ADA president. “Along with acknowledging past mistakes and to build a stronger, more inclusive platform for future accomplishments, the ADA apologizes to dentists for not strongly enforcing non-discriminatory membership practices prior to 1965. These are not my words alone — they embody a resolution adopted by the ADA Officers and Board of Trustees.”

Improvements in diversity

Gist said that in the 45 years since he was a dental student, there have been improvements in the diversity of the dental profession, membership and leadership of the ADA, and in initiatives to reduce disparities in the public’s oral health.

He said that although doors have been opened, more can be done to encourage careers in dentistry, citing enrollment in U.S. dental schools not keeping pace with the growth of underrepresented minorities in the U.S. population.

Gist explained that U.S. Census Bureau data indicate in 2009, African Americans and Hispanic Americans each totaled about 12.9 percent and 15.8 percent of the U.S. population, respectively. Yet, ADA survey data for the 2008/2009 school year indicate only about six percent of dental students were African American and six percent were Hispanic American.

Gist also noted that when it comes to the oral health of the public, African Americans and Hispanic Americans suffer higher rates of dental diseases.

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New website offers tips for a healthy adult smile

Get MouthPower is a new web resource where seniors age 50 and over can learn about oral-health issues specific to their age group. This user-friendly, interactive site includes comprehensive and quality oral-health information that can be used as a personal health resource or shared with family and friends with easy-to-use online sharing tools.

Dr. Rich Madow, from left, Dr. Jill Coon and Dr. Dave Madow during ‘The Best Seminar Ever’ in 2009. ‘We’ve got information about this year’s meeting, which you won’t want to miss!’ See page 8A

The site, focusing on the unique oral-health issues of older adults, was created by the National Museum of Dentistry with the support of Colgate-Palmolive. The site is located at www.GetMouthPower.org.

Get MouthPower includes informative oral-health tips, including an exploration of how the adult mouth is changing and what to do about it.
a special look at unique nutritional issues as people age, and an exploration of the connection between the mouth and the body. Sprinkled throughout the site is trivia about historic objects from the National Museum of Dentistry’s collection, such as the real story behind George Washington’s “wooden” teeth.

The unique oral-health issues of older adults is quickly becoming a priority as the U.S. population age 65 and over is anticipated to increase from 40 million in 2010 to 55 million in 2020 (a 36 percent jump), according to the U.S. Administration on Aging. People are also living longer, averaging 18 years after age 65.

“We want this growing segment of the population to become more aware of their health needs and the importance of good oral health,” said National Museum of Dentistry Executive Director Jonathan Landers. “Get MouthPower is an engaging resource for older adults to learn about changing oral-health issues and options specific to their age group. The more you know, the healthier and happier your golden years will be.”

The web resource covers several main topical areas:

• **Your Sparkling Smile**: A great smile is possible at any age. Oral-health tips will help older adults keep their smiles in top condition, including how to address emerging mobility and dexterity issues, how to care for implants and dentures, and how to be prepared for dental visits.

• **About Your Mouth**: Our mouth is constantly changing as we age, including changes in tooth color and enamel, gum tissue and sensation. Find out what’s going on and what can be done about tooth loss, dry mouth and more. Plus, take a risk assessment for oral cancer.

• **Fit to Eat**: Nutritional needs change at every stage of life. Check out these food tips to boost health, including a calculator to measure daily calcium intake and an entertaining nutritional boxing bout between your favorite foods.

• **The Mouth/Body Connection**: Your mouth and body are interconnected. Learn about the connection between oral health and overall health, and how periodontitis can affect heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

• **Interactive Timeline**: An interactive oral-health timeline that shows how a visit to the dentist has changed over the years, how dentistry has influenced pop culture, how toothbrushes and concoctions for a sparkling smile have evolved through the ages, and who are some famous and infamous dentists.

Get MouthPower was created by the National Museum of Dentistry. It was made possible by the financial support of Colgate-Palmolive.

(Source: National Museum of Dentistry)