



DENTAL AWARENESS MONTH 2004



August 2004 will be the month the Australian Dental Association Inc. (ADA) conducts its major public dental awareness campaign. This year the theme will 'Beyond Teeth'. It will address issues of dental health such as:

- Oral cancer
- Dry mouth syndrome
- Dental phobias
- Diabetes
- Periodontal disease
(plus links to cardiovascular disease)
- Snoring/mouth breathers
- Mouth ulcers
- Oral health and infection issues related to artificial hip, heart valve and prosthetic implants
- Oral conditions associated with eating disorders

A special focus will be given to oral cancers. Oral cancers currently account for up 6.5 per cent of all cancers diagnosed in Australia. More Australians die from oral cancer than cervical cancer each year.

More needs to be done in detection and prevention of oral cancer.

The ADA believes that early detection through opportunistic screening, such as that which occurs during regular dental check-ups, offers a simple way to identify those at risk.

The ADA says that in order to be effective in detection and prevention, the public needs to be diligent about oral health and make regular visits to their dentist. If oral cancer is detected early,

there is a 70 per cent survival rate in the first five years, compared to 30 per cent if the cancer has spread.

Throughout the world, oral cancer is the sixth most common cancer, affecting the tongue, lips, cheeks and soft palate. When statistics for all such cancers are combined, they result in more deaths each year in Australia than cervical cancer.

In 2000 in just one State in Australia (Victoria) 450 people were diagnosed with lip and oral cavity cancers. Of these, 72 died. This compares with 150 Victorians diagnosed with cervical cancer, of whom 52 died (a figure likely to have been reduced through effective screening programs).

The ADA is using the platform of their annual health promotion, Dental Awareness Month, to launch initiatives to help raise awareness about early detection of oral cancers. These include:

- investing in a communications campaign to the public to encourage community awareness about oral health as opposed to just 'dental' health. This includes highlighting awareness about a range of oral health issues including oral cancers
- developing strategic alliances with anti-tobacco organisations so that the ADA establishes a path to carry on effective smoking cessation campaigns.

Professor Chris O'Brien from the Sydney Head and Neck Institute reported that each year the Institute reports the diagnosis of 1000 new

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AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

cancers to the mouth, head and neck. He states that the vast majority of such cancers are directly attributable to smoking tobacco, particularly those to the mouth and throat. He added that when tobacco products are used in conjunction with consumption of alcohol, then the incidence of head and neck cancer is geometrically increased.

Dry Mouth Syndrome, also known as Xerostomia, can be a symptom of certain diseases and will also be featured. It is a relatively common condition related to reduce saliva flow in the mouth, which leads to a 'dry' mouth. It can produce serious, negative effects on the patient's quality of life, affecting dietary habits, nutritional status, speech, taste, difficulty with dental prosthesis such as dentures, and increased susceptibility to dental cavities. The increase in dental cavities can be devastating in many patients and therefore special care must be made to control this condition.

The condition may come about from a number of reasons and dentists are able to assist in the treatment and alleviation of the condition.

Eating disorders will also be dealt with during Dental Awareness Month. These include a range of conditions, including:

- anorexia nervosa which, in simple terms, refers to restricted eating and purging (vomiting), and
- bulimia nervosa in which the sufferer will 'gorge' large amounts of food and then vomit soon afterwards to rid themselves of the consumed food.

DAM will provide information on common signs and symptoms associated with eating disorders such as erosion of dental enamel, dental hypersensitivity, salivary gland enlargement and dryness of the mouth and decreased salivary flow.



DENTAL AWARENESS MONTH RUNS DURING AUGUST

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