



22.11.22

New dental President asks patients to reveal more to their dentist – for their own safety

New Australian Dental Association (ADA) President Dr Stephen Liew issued a warning today that patients need to be more open about what medications and supplements they're taking when two thirds of us regularly take complementary medicines.¹

Studies^{2,3} show that certain supplements and herbal remedies like turmeric, ginger, garlic, ginkgo biloba, ginseng, glucosamine, evening primrose oil and fish oil have been identified as having the potential to increase the risk of patient bleeding.

There are also increased bleeding risks for some prescription medications like anti-depressants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and blood thinners as well as when anti-clotting medications interact with other medications being taken.

“Dentists sometimes treat people without knowing the full range of prescription, complementary or over the counter medications patients are taking as many Australians aren't aware of the importance of sharing this vital information with their clinician,” said the Melbourne dentist who begins his new role today (Tuesday, 22 November) as the youngest ever ADA President.

“This can be problematic when we perform a procedure where bleeding needs to be controlled, such as a tooth extraction.

“It also emphasises the vital reason dentists take a full medical history during the patient's first visit, where as much information as possible is provided to them so they get the full picture - including family history, past operations and procedures, illnesses and current and previous medications.

“These all play a vital role in allowing your dentist to provide safe and personalised care. It's about an open and trusting relationship between clinician and patient - and that being as transparent as possible is for their own benefit.

“So we're asking people to come to their dental appointments armed with as much information as they can – it will help with their overall experience.”

ADA members receive regular training and updates regarding how medicines of all types act in the body and interact with one another. They're also provided with access to a consultant pharmacist who can respond to individual situations so that once a full patient picture is provided, a risk assessment can be calculated according to best practice recommendations.

“Sometimes that may mean advising the patient to come off a certain medication for a period - in consultation with their doctor - in the run up to a dental procedure which could result in bleeding.”

Dr Liew has been a general dentist for 15 years and as he begins his two-year tenure as ADA President, says his main challenge heading the dental profession in Australia is “guiding our profession and patients through a rapidly evolving healthcare environment, particularly new technologies that challenge the status quo, and doing this in the most efficient way across the country so that we continue to improve the oral health of Australians.”



NOTE TO EDITORS: Photo attached of Dr Steve Liew, new ADA President.

References:

- (1). von Conrady DM, Bonney A. Patterns of complementary and alternative medicine use and health literacy in general practice patients in urban and regional Australia. *Aust Fam Physician* 2017;46:316–320.
- (2). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/adj.12751>
- (3) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17908423/>