



Dental IMPACT

Dental Impact Project

Seminar that precedes UOR will teach participants about conducting a public health project in their communities

by Noel Kelsch, RDHAP

What if you could go to a meeting, visit with friends from far and wide, and at the same time give back to a community? But “that’s not all,” as a TV pitchman would add. This meeting would help you develop the skills and plans for a public health project that can be duplicated back home and you earn continuing education units at the same time.

You can go to such a meeting! Dental Impact is both a course and a community project hosted at the RDH Under One Roof conference. Dental Impact aims to give everyone the tools for starting a public health project in their home state. Afterwards, participants head out into the Orlando community (the 2010 host city of RDH Under One Roof) to practice what they have learned.

Every day, dental hygienists make a major impact on their patients’ understanding of preventive measures and oral health. But what about the consumer that does not come into the dental setting and those

whose culture accepts edentulism as a normal part of life? On some occasions, the message of dental prevention might include:

- A July 4th parade of a group of “tooth fairies”
- A free media spot filled with information regarding the contagiousness of dental disease
- A course for other health-care providers that gives them the understanding and tools to prevent oral diseases with their clients
- Perhaps a Saturday devoted to giving the commu-

nity the information and supplies to prevent dental disease

These formats give the hygienist

Dental Impact

Who: Dental hygienists and other health-care professionals

What: A half-day seminar, and a half-day of public service (six CE credits)

When: August 4, 2010

Where: Orlando, Florida

Why: To spread the message of prevention to underserved consumers.

How: Register at www.dentalimpact.net

the power to change the concept of dental caries for the consumer.

The education of the public about the contagiousness of dental disease and the importance of preventive measures can change lives for generations to come. A public health project allows the hygienist to get the message out to those who cannot come to us.

When hygienists are given the tools, a public health program will make a major impact on the future of oral health in the community. These projects are an essential part of changing a community's view about oral health and preventive measures.

But how is it done?

As dental hygienists, we all know oral health is an essential and integral component of overall health throughout life. Unless arrested early, caries is an irreversible and even life-threatening disease. Understanding protective and pathological factors of dental disease impacts the community daily. Having knowledge of the contagiousness of disease can mean the difference between children experiencing a disease that destroys their teeth and can lead to hospitalization (and even death), or having a bright smile. Getting this information to the consumer can sometimes pose a challenge.

The mission of public health includes promoting physical health and preventing disease and disability. To accomplish this, preventive measures are used to prevent epidemics and the spread of disease. Promotion and encouragement of healthy behaviors assures the health of generations to come. Understanding how to conduct a public health project can simplify the process and add to the success of the project.

UOR empowers the hygienist

The Dental Impact program that precedes the RDH Under One Roof conference includes a section on informing, educating, and empowering. It then goes on to mobilize community partnerships and campaign for change. The first part of the program will be a continuing education course for hygienists that educates on the challenges of developing public health projects, the contagiousness of dental disease, and the use of xylitol in preventing diseases. The second part of the program will be demonstrating how to educate other professionals about oral diseases, their effects and preventive measures. Invited guests from the community — including

nurses, doctors, special needs organizations, and community decision makers — will present a seminar. This education helps assure the program does not stop at RDH Under One Roof. This has proven to be one of the most impactful ways to bring information forward and bring about changes in the public's health.

By educating those who can go to policymakers about this critical issue, changes will take place. Hygienists do want to make a difference. Providing them the latest information on this issue and opportunities to take action in their communities will make a difference in the health and future of our nation.

In its final step, the Dental Impact program will then “hit the street” and go into the community in Orlando to spread the message to the community. You will go home with a detailed workbook and materials necessary to make an impact in your community by organize a community health project.

I hope you will join us in this day of learning and giving.

Noel Brandon Kelsch, RDHAP, is a syndicated columnist, writer, speaker, and cartoonist. She is a member of the Organization for Safety and Asepsis Procedures and has received many national awards and owns her dental hygiene practice that focuses on access to care for all. She has devoted much of her 35 years in dentistry to educating people about the devastating effects of methamphetamine and drug use. She is immediate past president of the California Dental Hygienists' Association, on the board of directors for the Simi Valley Free Clinic.



