



Perio-Systemic Thoughts

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The oral systemic links or mouth-body connections are now well established concepts in the dental and medical professions. I speak about these links in my presentations all the time. Sometimes we are all able to step back from the minute details of the events and factors involved in these relationships, and see the whole forest, not just the individual trees. When a person has diabetes, there is not a concept that the areas of the body that are commonly affected, such as the feet, or the kidneys or the eyes are not connected to the rest of the body. They are just parts of the body. Even though we now accept oral systemic linkages, the very concept implies that the oral cavity is, to some extent, separate from the rest of the body. There is no concept of podiatric/systemic links, or kidney/systemic links or cardio/systemic links or ophthalmic/ systemic links. There are just oral/systemic links. Perhaps we should be thinking of the oral cavity in a way that affirms it as just another area of the body. The legs, feet, eyes and kidneys are just areas of the body commonly adversely affected in poorly controlled diabetic people. The mouth is no different. The increased incidence of periodontal disease, caries, ulcers and infections that occur in the mouths of poorly controlled diabetic individuals, are also an area of the same body that suffer in hyperglycemic states. If we think about the mouth as just another part of the body, perhaps it will advance our understanding of the effect of oral health on general health. When a podiatrist is treating a diabetic patient, she is commonly treating an infection in the feet or ankles, but also thinking of how the infection increases insulin resistance, worsening glycemic control. When we address periodontitis, we should be acting locally (the mouth) and thinking globally (the rest of the body).

Local action involves preventing the development of periodontal disease and treating it where it already exists, especially for diabetic individuals and pregnant women. Just something to think about.

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