



Healthy Gums & A Healthy Heart: The Perio-Cardo Connection

presented by Dr. Richard T. Herman DMD

Cardiovascular disease, the leading killer of men and women in the United States, is a major public health issue contributing to 2,400 deaths each day. Periodontal disease, a chronic inflammatory disease that destroys bone and gum tissues that support the teeth affects nearly 75 percent of Americans and is the major cause of adult tooth loss. And while the prevalence rates of these diseases states seems grim, researches suggest that managing one disease may reduce the risk for the other.

A consensus paper on the relationship between heart disease and gum disease was recently published concurrently in the online versions of two leading publications, the *American Journal of Cardiology (AJC)*, a publication circulated to 30,000 cardiologists, and the *Journal of Periodontology (JOP)*, the official publication of the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP). Developed in concert by cardiologist, the physicians specialized

in treating diseases of the heart, and periodontist, the dentist with advanced training in the treatment and prevention of periodontal disease, the paper contains clinical recommendation for both medical and dental professionals to use in managing patients living with, or who are at risk for, either disease. As a result of the paper, cardiologist may now examine a patient's mouth, and periodontist may begin asking questions about heart health and family history of heart disease.

The clinical recommendations were developed at a meeting held earlier this year of top opinion leaders in both cardiology and periodontology. In addition to the clinical recommendations, the consensus paper summarizes the scientific evidence that links periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease and explains the underlying biologic and inflammatory mechanisms that may be the basis for the connection.

According to Kenneth Kornman, DDS, PhD, editor of the *Journal of Periodontology* and a co-author of the consensus report, the cooperation between the cardiology

and periodontal communities is an important first step in helping patients reduce their risk of these associated diseases. "Inflammation is a major risk factor for heart disease, and periodontal disease may increase the inflammation level throughout the body. Since several studies have shown that patients with periodontal disease have an increased risk for cardiovascular disease, we felt it was important to develop clinical recommendations for our respective specialties. Therefore, you will now see cardiologists and periodontists joining forces to help our patients."

For patients, this may mean receiving some unconventional advice from their periodontist or cardiologist. The clinical recommendations outlined in the consensus paper advise that periodontist not only inform their patients of the increased risk of cardiovascular disease associated with periodontal disease, but also assess their risk for future cardiovascular disease and guide them to be evaluated for the major risk factors. The paper also recommends that physicians managing patients with cardiovascular disease evaluate the mouth for basic signs of periodontal disease such as significant tooth loss, visual signs of oral inflammation, and receding gums.

While additional research will help identify the precise relationship between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, recent emphasis has been placed on the role of inflammation- the body's reaction to fight off infection, guard against injury or shield against irritation. While inflammation initially intends to have a protective effect,

untreated chronic inflammation can lead to dysfunction of the affected tissues, and therefore to more severe health complications.

"Both periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease are inflammatory diseases, and inflammation is the common mechanism that connects them," says Dr. David Cochran, DDS, PhD, President of the AAP and Chair of the Department of Periodontics at the University of Texas Health Science center at San Antonio. "The clinical recommendations included in the consensus paper will help periodontist and cardiologists control the inflammatory burden the body as a result of gum disease or heart disease, thereby helping to reduce further disease progression, and ultimately to improve our patients' overall health. That is our common goal."

About the American Academy of Periodontology

The American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) is the professional organization for periodontists, specialists in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases affecting the gums and supporting structures of the teeth, and in the placement of dental implants. Periodontists are also dentistry's experts in the treatment of oral inflammation. They received three additional years, 3100-5100 hours, of specialized training in the fields of Periodontics and Dental Implants following dental school and Periodontics are one of nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association. The AAP has 8,000 members world-wide.

From the *American Journal of Cardiology (AJC)*, June 1, 2009

I read it in the Women's Journal!



Dr. Richard T. Herman
**Central Pennsylvania
Periodontics, LLC**

*1372 N. Susquehanna Trail • Suite 304
Selingsgrove, PA
570-743-1155*

Visit us online at www.centralpaperio.com

New patients are always welcome!

A referral from your general dentist is not necessary.