



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRE



For immediate release (Disponible en français sur la demande)

Media Release

Dental Hygienists Recommend Tossing the Tobacco!

January 25, 2013 (Ottawa, ON) — “Live, work and play... smoke free” is the theme for this week’s National Non-Smoking Week (NNSW) 2013 and a mantra supported by Canada’s dental hygienists. Tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of disease and death in Canada, killing 37,000 Canadians annually. Direct health care costs from tobacco exceed \$4.4 billion per year and total economic costs are greater than \$17 billion per year.

On a daily basis, dental hygienists see first-hand, the harmful impact of tobacco use - from bad breath and yellowing teeth, to more severe telltale signs of serious diseases. In many cases, dental hygienists are the FIRST to recognize signs of oral cancer from tobacco use, as well as tooth decay and abrasion caused by chewing tobacco. “The connection between tobacco use and oral health is well established” says Sandy Lawlor, president of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA). “There is a causal relationship between tobacco use and oral cancer and tobacco chewers are more likely to develop dental caries, and are at greater risk of developing mouth-related disease”.

As important members of the interprofessional health care team, dental hygienists play a key role in tobacco cessation and related disease prevention. Oral effects of tobacco use, such as periodontal disease, usually appear before other systemic effects and educating clients about these visible changes can be a powerful motivator for tobacco cessation. “Our skills in health promotion, disease detection, and behavioural modification allow us to make significant contributions in the area of tobacco cessation” adds Lawlor.

2013 is a milestone year for dental hygienists in Canada as we celebrate 100 years of the founding of the dental hygiene profession and 50 years of our national association CDHA. As a profession committed to encouraging tobacco free lifestyles CDHA has published a joint policy document on [The Role of Health Professionals](#)

[in Tobacco Cessation](#) as well as a position paper titled [Tobacco Use Cessation and the Role of the Dental Hygienist](#).” This commitment and continued investment in tobacco use cessation will ultimately save lives and provide cost savings to the health system down the road.

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 24,000 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 16,500 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the 6th largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: www.cdha.ca

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