



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

For immediate release (Disponible en français sur la demande)

Media Release

Dental Hygienists Work to Improve Oral Cancer Outcomes

January 30, 2014 (Ottawa, ON) —Dental hygienists in Canada have joined the global fight to help save the 1.5 million lives that the World Health Organization estimates are lost prematurely each year to cancer. As active supporters of World Cancer Day on February 4, dental hygienists remind Canadians that early detection and prevention strategies are key to improving treatment outcomes.

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada, accounting for 30% of all deaths. Oral cancer is now the 13th most common type of cancer and, in 2013, researchers estimated that roughly 4100 Canadians were diagnosed with oral cancer. Canadians need to know that oral cancer is treatable if detected early. Mary Bertone, president of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) explains, “Canadians should schedule regular dental visits because dental hygienists are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of oral cancer and will refer you to a specialist if any irregularities are detected.” Dental hygienists also advise clients on the hazards of tobacco use, a known risk factor for oral cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

“Canadians can take some comfort in knowing that there are things they can do about oral cancer,” Bertone adds. In between dental visits, people should watch for the following changes in their mouths.

- red or white patches
- a lump or thickening of tissue in the mouth, neck or face
- sores in the mouth that bleed or do not heal within 14 days
- numbness
- wart-like masses inside the mouth
- pain or difficulty swallowing, speaking, chewing or moving the jaw or tongue
- hoarse throat that lasts for a long period of time

Canadians should also examine their lifestyle choices and eliminate tobacco use, drink alcohol in moderation, protect their skin and lips from the sun, and practise safe sex to prevent the transmission of HPV. These risk reduction strategies coupled with regular oral cancer screening by a dental professional will go a long way to reducing the incidence of oral cancer both in Canada and worldwide.

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 17,000 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, including independent practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca

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Angie D’Aoust, Director of Marketing and Communications
1-800-267-5235 ext. 134, or email adaoust@cdha.ca

www.cdha.ca

