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Media Release

Dental Hygienists Advocate for a World Without Tobacco

May 29, 2015 (Ottawa, ON) — As active supporters of World No Tobacco Day (May 31), Canada's dental hygienists remind us of the need to eliminate tobacco use for improved oral and overall health. While most people know that tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in Canada, few may be aware that tobacco kills nearly 6 million people worldwide each year. In addition, the harmful chemicals in cigarettes pass through one's oral cavity, including the lips, tongue, teeth, and gums, causing adverse oral health effects.

"Individuals who smoke are at greater risk for gum disease, oral cancer, and are likely to experience bad breath and discoloured teeth," explains Mandy Hayre, president of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA). "Educating clients about the visible changes in their mouths can be a powerful motivator for tobacco cessation and may ultimately save lives," says Hayre. Oral cancer, a hazard of tobacco use, is currently the 13th most common cancer in Canada. Dental hygienists have the skills, knowledge, and judgement to detect adverse changes in your mouth, including signs of tobacco use, and recommend timely referrals to appropriate health professionals.

Of increasing concern to Canada's dental hygienists is the fact that teenagers are now being introduced to tobacco use through new products, such as hookah/waterpipes, flavoured tobacco, and e-cigarettes. To counteract this trend, CDHA and the Canadian Coalition for Action on Tobacco urge the federal government to develop new and innovative tobacco control strategies for tobacco prevention programs. Along with a good oral care plan that includes regular dental hygiene visits, oral cancer screenings, and smoking cessation strategies, federal regulatory action and the promotion of a tobacco-free lifestyle will help to improve the oral and overall health of all Canadians.

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 sixth 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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