

# DDS DENTAL NEWS

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DENTAL COORDINATOR:



Dr. Mellissa Meincken; Dr. Jacqueline Rossi, Dental Director; Dinah Auger, RDH; Izabella Pulvermacher; Patti Passmore, Care Coordinator

Part of my job is visiting dental offices and working with local dental providers to create professional relationships that will benefit DDS consumers. In this world of budget crises, funding cuts, and layoffs, I recently discovered a real gem of a service provider.

I met with a dental team who genuinely cares for the welfare of their patients and strives to deliver the best care in a friendly atmosphere. This team is located at the United Community & Family Services (UCFS) in Norwich.

Dr. Rossi and her staff realized that a dental office might be a very scary place and wanted to eliminate that fear. They created a "Special Smile" room for individuals who need a little more tender care.

Kristen Gray, a medical clerk at UCFS, transformed a plain white wall into a magical underworld adventure. Stuffed animals and children's coloring pages are displayed throughout. All of the standard dental

equipment is present, but it is not the first thing that would be noticed by a patient.

This office found a perfect balance of delivering proper dental care in a fun and beautiful setting. The UCFS dental clinic works closely with the rest of their departments that include medical services, behavior health services, elderly care, and community outreach.

This dental clinic is able to collaborate with the behavior health clinic to formulate a behavior modification plan to help an individual become a better dental patient. Patricia Passmore, the Care Coordinator sponsored by the Eastern Connecticut Medical Home Initiative, will help families navigate the intricacies of the care programs to ensure the best overall care for their children. To schedule an appointment at UCFS you may call 860-892-7042 ext. 734.



## Who Should Perform Oral Exams?

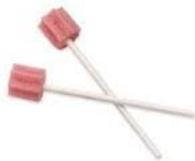
It has come to the attention of the Dental Coordinator that some DDS consumers receive their oral exams by their medical physicians during route physical examinations. A medical doctor is qualified to do such an exam. However, this is not the best practice for several reasons. A dentist is more familiar with the anatomy of the mouth and is specifically trained to identify abnormalities in the mouth, including oral cancer. Therefore, an oral exam by a dentist is still the preferred approach.



According to Dr. Paul Vankevich, Assistant Professor at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, most oral cancers are essentially preventable and with early diagnosis and timely treatment have a good prognosis. The key element is early diagnosis!

More than 90% of oral cancers occur in individuals older than 45 years. According to the American Cancer Society, cigarette smoking is the major single cause of cancer mortality in this country. Smoking is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths in the United States. Men are twice as likely to be affected as women, with the average age at diagnosis of 60 years. DDS consumers are living longer and therefore oral exams should be performed by dental professionals and should be part of their overall health maintenance.

## Toothette or not Toothette



Toothettes are small pink sponges that are attached to a lollipop stick and are frequently used to administer oral hygiene to individuals who are medically compromised. There are several controversies regarding using the Toothette when providing mouth care. First, the sponge is fairly fragile and if someone bites down on it, it can come off, potentially causing a choking hazard. Secondly, Toothettes do not remove dental plaque as effectively as toothbrushes.

After consulting with numerous dental professionals from across the country, it is strongly suggested that all Toothettes be replaced with a soft toothbrush. The toothbrush will remove dental plaque more effectively and in the long run will improve the individual's oral health.

When there is a need to deliver mouthwash and the individual cannot swish, pour the desired amount of the liquid into the cup and then dip the toothbrush and brush on the mouthwash at the gum line. Keeping an extra toothbrush next to the mouthwash may help.



### Did You Know?

“Most bottled waters don’t contain the flouride level recommended by dentists. But water-filtration pitchers, like Brita, retain most of the flouride that’s added to water.”

*Samantha B. Cassetty, GHRI nutrition director*

## Medicaid Update

The 2011 fiscal year has brought numerous changes, including changes to the dental portion of the Medicaid benefits for adults in Connecticut. Dental services were not eliminated, but several services were reduced. These changes were seen by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Connecticut Dental Health Partnership (CDHP) as the best way to preserve comprehensive adult dental services and still address the Connecticut budget crisis. Connecticut is one of only six states that provide adult dental services under Medicaid. In neighboring Massachusetts, the adult dental benefit was eliminated except for emergency services. DSS, CTDHP and the dental community want to avoid following in our neighbors’ footsteps.

### *What does this all mean?*

The law states that healthy adults who have Medicaid coverage in Connecticut will have dental benefits that include one oral exam and one set of bitewing x-rays each year as well as an annual dental cleaning (dental prophylaxis), all part of preventative care. It becomes critical that an individual stays with one dental facility known as his or her “dental home” and does not use multiple dental offices. If a second opinion is required, it must be arranged in advance.

When an individual has a chronic medical condition that warrants a dental service in excess of the defined limitations for each procedure, such as an additional dental cleaning, the dental provider may request the needed service by filling out a Prior Authorization request and submitting it to the Connecticut Dental Health Partnership. The Prior Authorization request must include the medical diagnosis of the individual requiring additional dental services, and the medications that the person is taking or a description of the dental condition if the person’s oral hygiene is poor. Most dental facilities are familiar with Prior Authorization requests and are receiving support from Connecticut Dental Health Partnership staff in understanding these new regulations.

If you need additional information please e-mail DDS Dental Coordinator, Izabella Pulvermacher, at [Izabella.Pulvermacher@ct.gov](mailto:Izabella.Pulvermacher@ct.gov) for directions to the right resource.