

word of mouth
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dental
on raffles

Look out teeth watch out gums oral hygiene - Here it comes!

The consequences of poor oral health are more than simply cosmetic - we've known this for some time. But now there's new evidence which suggests those consequences could be a bit more serious than first thought.

Recently published research indicates that, compared to the risks associated with diabetes, people are twice as likely to suffer a non-fatal stroke as a result of periodontitis, or gum disease.

I'm sure that this will come as a surprise to many. Most of us would accept that diabetes and high blood pressure would be risk factors, but the research also shows that, in the case of high blood pressure as a contributor to strokes, gum disease has a similar impact.

The findings, presented at the 89th International Association for Dental Research (IADR) meeting in San Diego earlier this year, remind us once again of the serious impact that poor oral health poses to general health and wellbeing.

The Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, said: "The research sends a clear message that the risks caused by poor oral health should not be overlooked or considered less important than other factors."

However, the reality is that prevention of gum disease is not high on most people's priority list. Why? Because unlike damage to the teeth from trauma or decay, gum disease, often has little pain associated with it. Unfortunately, most



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of us tend to act only when a problem causes physical discomfort. But in the case of gum disease, that could be a wee bit too late.

The good news is that Dental On Raffles has made prevention of gum disease a key component of patient care. Our new intra-oral cameras will be able to track gum health over time, helping to identify any onset as early as possible. We have also recently appointed Rachelle, a full-time hygienist, who will specialise in long-term oral health care.

We encourage our patients to visit our hygienist regularly, as part of their overall oral health care plan. But as well as regular check ups, prevention of gum disease ultimately comes down to what you do at home. It's very important to maintain the habit of brushing teeth twice a day for at least two minutes, and flossing or using interdental brushes, all of which will help to reduce plaque, the main cause of gum disease.

If you have any concerns in this area, now is the perfect time to talk to us. Rachelle, our new hygienist, has come all the way from Australia to work with us and you couldn't be in better hands. So, my message to you is: look after your oral health - and make sure your perfect smile lasts you a lifetime.

Gary

a picture is worth
a thousand words:
our new intra-
oral cameras



'The images are
instantly displayed on
a computer screen
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film to be processed.'

As your dental health care professionals, we believe it's important that you are kept in the picture. That's why we've invested in some new technology in our surgeries which will literally change the way you see yourself!

Although we can see in and around teeth during a routine appointment, we realise you can't. Let's face it, you're sitting there looking at us, so even the results of regular procedures can be difficult to visualise - particularly for work on the innermost teeth.

Our new intra-oral cameras have changed all that, because now you can

see exactly what we see.

Unlike x-rays, these cameras provide conventional colour images which are easy to understand - they're just like looking at your holiday photos.

Well, not quite - but you will be able to clearly see how healthy your teeth and gums are, or where treatment may be required. You'll also be able to compare before and after images of any dental work - just in case you want to show your work colleagues at morning tea.

The images are instantly displayed on a computer screen within the surgery, so there's no waiting for film to be processed.

Looking a little bit like an electric tooth brush connected to a USB cable, the camera uses an LED light to illuminate the inside your mouth and take pictures. It's fitted with a sterile translucent disposable sheath, which is discarded after each use, so the procedure is completely safe and painless.

Used in conjunction with digital x-ray imaging, intra-oral cameras are another tool to help confirm diagnosis, establish success of treatment and monitor progress after surgery. They also provide a valuable historical record, stored along with your notes on our archives, which allows us to track and maintain your long term oral health.

Specialist recruited to wage war on gum disease

q & a with Rachelle Sievers

Word of Mouth's roving reporter Stu interviews our latest team member

Q: Hi Rachelle, and welcome to New Zealand

A: Well, I'm actually a Kiwi - I grew up on a farm in Levin - I've just been working in Australia

Q: Oh, I beg your pardon. Well in that case - welcome back!

A: Thanks, it's good to be here - especially back in Hawke's Bay - it's such a cruisey place to live and work.

Q: Dental hygienist is a professional qualification - where did you train?

A: Otago. I did two years down there - but it's now a three-year course.

Q: How did you get into the dental health profession in the first place?

A: It was actually in the New Zealand Army - I joined when I was 17, and trained as a dental assistant.

Q: That's a bit different

A: Yes! (laughs) The Army is a good place to learn a trade - plus all the other skills it teaches you. I travelled around New Zealand, helped set up field clinics, learned how to adapt to new challenges - it was a great experience. And I made some great lifelong friends.

Q: So you've fired a gun?

A: I've actually thrown a grenade! (laughs)

Q: But now you've got gum disease in your sights...

A: That's a wee bit lame Stu...

Q: Yeah, um - sorry. Tell me what you do now as a dental hygienist - what's an average day for you?

A: Well, part of my work is education - particularly for younger patients - getting them into good oral hygiene habits early in life. The other part is monitoring adult patients and treating early signs of gum disease. Sometimes treating advanced cases.



Q: So how do you do that?

A: First of all, I look at a patient's health history from their records. Then I'll have a good look to see what's happened since the last check up. I measure the depths of pockets around the teeth and look for any changes there. If necessary, I take X-rays to check teeth and jaw bone. I take impressions, check bite and overhang. I do a professional clean to remove bacterial plaque and calculus, with an anti-microbial rinse. I also do cosmetic polishing.

Q: So there's a bit more to it than just cleaning then?

A: For sure. It covers the range - from detecting and treating oral disease, to preparing mouths for complex restorative care. A hygienist is part of the professional dental care team And I'm stoked to be working here with Gary and his team.

Q: How does someone know if they have problem with oral health?

A: Well, that's the thing about gum disease - it can sneak up on you. So you need to keep on top of it. There are some obvious signs though - for instance, your gums should not bleed when brushing or flossing. If they do this regularly, you probably should get it checked out sooner, rather than later.

Q: What else can people do?

A: It comes right back to the basics really - clean and floss regularly, brush twice a day for at least two minutes. If you can, use an electric toothbrush - they are much more effective. But you can get more out of your trusty toothbrush with good brushing technique - which I can show you, next time you come in!

Join us on Facebook

We've taken the conversation online by joining Facebook. This month, we gave away electric toothbrushes to Friends who could share a funny dentist joke. Here's our favourite, from Amy-Jane Burns:

A husband and wife walk into the dentist's office.

The husband says, "I want a tooth pulled. I don't want gas or novocain because I am in a terrible hurry. Just pull the tooth as quickly as possible".

"You're a brave man", said the dentist. "Now show me which tooth it is".

The husband turns to the wife and says, "Open your mouth and show the dentist which tooth it is dear"...

And here's some intriguing oral hygiene products we stumbled upon online. Bacon toothpaste anyone?



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facebook.

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www.facebook.com/dentalonraffles

Learning from the world's best:

The field of dentistry is constantly evolving through the development of new techniques, new technologies, as well as the continual refinement of established practices.

In order to keep abreast of the latest developments, Gary Winter is studying towards his Postgraduate Masters Diploma in Implant Dentistry with the Global Institute for Dental Education (GIDE).

Based out of Los Angeles, GIDE offers professional education through face-to-face and online lectures, presented by some of dentistry's finest educators and clinicians. Gary's diploma consists of four block courses - three in Sydney, and one final course in Los Angeles later this year. The remainder of the 1,200 hour curriculum consists of interactive forums and online training, offering valuable opportunities for real-time discussion and mentoring.

The importance of continual professional development is underlined by the rapid development of implant dentistry itself. Although it began to establish itself in the mid 1990s,

techniques back then were relatively crude by today's standards. Since those times, this specialised area of dentistry has become 'restorative-driven'. In other words, once foundation techniques had been mastered, the emphasis shifted to ensure that the end results were as cosmetically pleasing as possible.

Guided bone regeneration has been a relatively recent, but significant breakthrough. Using techniques pioneered in cranio-facial surgery, bone can be harvested to regenerate bone in deficient areas - improving gum contour, overall visual appearance - and therefore the ultimate success of implant work.

Although day-to-day implant procedures at Dental On Raffles are relatively minor by comparison to the procedures mentioned above - it's comforting to know your dental surgery is up-to-date with the latest advances, absorbing knowledge and skills from world's best practitioners, and bringing that valuable expertise back here to Hawke's Bay.

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our mission: perfect smiles

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