
A Letter From the ADA President

Dear Colleagues:

Will you help us save some lives? Oral and pharyngeal cancer is a devastating disease that kills more than one American each hour of the year. No other oral diseases are as life-threatening. Five-year survival rates approximate 50 percent primarily because the disease often is diagnosed late in the process, when survival rates plummet to less than 20 percent. However, if the disease is diagnosed early, while the lesion is still localized, the five-year survival rate is increased to 80 percent.

This is where we can help.

The majority of adult Americans visit the dentist at least once each year. Thus, the dental profession is well-positioned to help decrease oral cancer death rates by fostering early detection and treatment of the disease, and by counseling our susceptible patients about the two primary controllable risk factors—smoking and drinking. This is why the American Dental Association and several other prestigious institutions are sponsoring this supplement to *The Journal of the American Dental Association*. Several other initiatives include regional oral cancer screenings, an ADA-co-sponsored public awareness campaign, online and conventional continuing education courses, and federally supported oral cancer research and intervention programs.

You will learn several things by reading this supplement. For example, the public generally is ill-informed about oral cancer examinations. Thus, it is important for you to explain to your patients what you are doing when providing this important service. Moreover, you will learn about oral cancer diagnostic aids, as well as the fact that 25 percent of patients with oral cancer neither smoke nor drink. Patients quickly grasp the importance of receiving a regular oral cancer examination. Indeed, a routine oral cancer examination should be as important as a Pap smear, a mammogram or a prostate-specific antigen test, and it is a pivotal component of the care we provide to our patients.

I know you will respond, “Yes,” to my opening question and, together this year, we can begin saving more lives.

Sincerely,



D. Gregory Chadwick,
D.D.S., M.S.
President