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The importance of salivary assessment in dental practice

Because of product advertisement related to dry mouth products, Dentists and hygienists are becoming more often than not the health care providers that are consulted for problems involving salivation. Research suggests that dry mouth, a common malady, is particularly distressing to patients and can significantly impact quality of life. As Dental providers, we know that excessive dry mouth, also termed Xerostomia, can cause oral discomfort and sleep disturbance and increase caries susceptibility and periodontal disease. Xerostomia may be the result of medication use or caused by systemic disease. But the complaint of dry mouth does not always correlate with actual dry mouth, an important factor that must be considered in dental treatment planning, systemic disease identification and dental disease prevention. Thus, for cases involving complaint of dry mouth, knowing what constitutes adequate salivary flow and its assessment must be an important component of the patient's dental evaluation. This lecture will briefly discuss the medical problems that can contribute to a perception of dry mouth or cause Xerostomia, how to clinically evaluate the salivary glands, how to measure salivary flow to determine if there is insufficient salivation, and the new innovative management strategies and OTC products that can be helpful in reducing day time and night time dry mouth.

Biography

Jeff Burgess has received his DDS and MSD from the University of Washington, School of Dentistry, in Seattle. He practiced General Dentistry for 10 years and returned to the UW to pursue an MSD in Oral Medicine followed by a two year Post-doctoral Fellowship in the Department of Anesthesiology at the University Medical Center. He subsequently served 15 years as a Consultant and Attending at the Medical Center Pain Center and at the same time was a Research and Clinical Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Oral Medicine. He also saw patients in a private Oral Medicine practice for 18 years. He is board certified in Oral Medicine and has been a co-investigator on numerous studies and authored and co-authored multiple chapters in medical and dental texts as well as articles in peer-reviewed journals and for Web MD (Reference Section) and Pennwell. He is the Director of Oral Care Research Associates and recently completed studies related to dry mouth.

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