

Tuesday, Apr 18, 5:36 PM

Caring for the Cancer Patient

by [Gum Brand](#) | [gumbrand.com](#)

To ensure delivery of [gumbrand.com](#) emails to your inbox, please add customerservice@gumbrand.com to your Address Book or Safe Senders List. To view this email in your web browser, [click here](#)

SUNSTAR

E-Briefs News You Can Use

YOUR MONTHLY CLINICAL UPDATE

April 2017

[Click here to subscribe to the Sunstar E-Briefs](#)

[Sunstar E-Brief Archive](#)

[Between Teeth Cleaning](#)

[Pain Management](#)

[Operatory](#)

[Dental Kits](#)

[Toothbrushes](#)

[Children's Products](#)

Caring for the Cancer Patient



The need for oral health care does not end when a cancer diagnosis is made. While some cancer therapies can affect the timing of oral health care delivery, patients who are receiving cancer therapy and those who have completed treatment still require dental hygiene care. This *Sunstar E-Brief* explores how to plan for that care and offers important tips about selecting medicaments that address the negative oral health effects of cancer therapy.

Complications that affect the oral cavity develop in more than one-third of individuals who receive cancer treatment.¹ This number is significant considering that in 2016 as many as 1.6 million cancer cases were expected to be diagnosed in the United States.² Add to that the projection that 40% of men and women are expected to

Special Offers

SUNSTAR
GUM NUXUKIT GUIDOR

GUM
NUXUKIT
GUIDOR

CLICK HERE

World
Dental
Hygienist
Awards

The Sunstar
Foundation
Applauds
Your Efforts

Learn More

receive a cancer diagnosis during their lifetimes, and it becomes clear that dental hygienists will provide care to patients with cancer.² ^

My Patient Has Cancer. Now What?

Once a patient is diagnosed with cancer, the issue of identifying and properly addressing the potential toxicity of cancer therapies affecting becomes paramount, according to Debbie Zafiropoulos, RDH, partner in education, Wellness Dentistry Network, and founder of NationalCancerNetwork.org. Zafiropoulos, a 2016 Sunstar Award of Distinction recipient, says that because certain side effects are common to both radiation and chemotherapy, thorough oral evaluations must be performed at every dental appointment.

Dental hygienists also need to educate patients about minimizing complications during treatment. "One of the first things I teach during certification training is to listen," Zafiropoulos says. She adds that after asking patients a series of open-ended questions, dental hygienists should slow down and listen intently to patients.

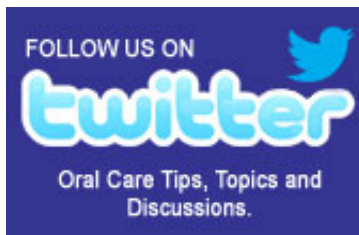
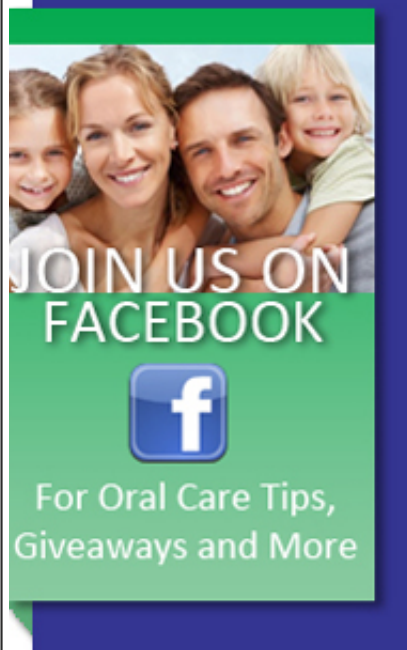
"It is vitally important to remain open minded, research different products, pay attention to ingredients and pH levels, and listen to a patient so that we can develop an ideal self-care regimen that is understandable, implementable, and, most importantly, effective," Zafiropoulos says.

Clinicians should avoid inundating patients with information about available resources that can be used to relieve pain, alleviate dry mouth, remove biofilm, and other information. "As a result of all the minutiae patients may become so overwhelmed they resort to just brushing, which is not acceptable," Zafiropoulos says.

Treating Oral Health Side Effects

Dental hygienists help to identify medically necessary treatment and select therapeutically necessary solutions to reduce the risk and severity of any oral complications. Zafiropoulos adds that specific suggestions should be made to prevent, reduce, or eliminate oral pain. "For example mouth sores are an effect of cancer therapy and an alcohol-free product, such as Rincinol from Sunstar, quickly and effectively creates a soothing barrier that patients desperately need," Zafiropoulos says.

Xerostomia, if unaddressed, can create serious problems for cancer patients and survivors. Likewise, she adds, hypersensitive taste or diminished taste should also be treated. For these conditions clinicians may use a number



of mouthrinses, pastes, or breath sprays. An unflavored rinse option may be best for symptomatic patients.

A number of products sold over the counter (OTC) can also help patients find relief, such as dry mouth gels that contain xylitol which, Zafiropoulos points out, promote salivation and moisturize oral tissues. Likewise, she says, OTC alcohol-free sprays¹ with some formulated to lubricate tissue for up to 8 hours² can be valuable tools in treating patients who are undergoing cancer treatment,

Consistent evaluation and monitoring by the dental team is essential to minimize long-term or irreversible damage to the mucosa and the structures of bone, teeth, and gingiva, according to Zafiropoulos. Creating a pretreatment oral care, such as the one discussed at NationalCancerNetwork.org, she says, is a significant step to improving patient comfort and collaboration with the oncology team.

Zafiropoulos recommends making custom fluoride trays for the prevention of tooth demineralization. According to Zafiropoulos patients should be using trays 7 days to 10 days prior to the initiation of radiation treatment with either a 1.1% neutral sodium fluoride gel, especially for patients with composites or crown and bridgework. Unflavored 0.4% stannous fluoride is also an option, she says, and adds that the daily use of fluoride is recommended for patients affected by radiation-induced salivary gland dysfunction.

Patient-Centered Practice

The greatest challenge for oral health professionals, as Zafiropoulos sees it, is not only which product to dispense, but finding enough time during the appointment to comprehensively identify any risks that may develop due to cancer therapy. "Follow up with patients and their caregivers to offer support, and let them know that you are available for more frequent evaluations as they progress through therapy," Zafiropoulos says. She adds: "Let them know how much you care, not just how much you know."

A cancer diagnosis can be frightening. However, a reliable and attentive team of health care professionals steering a patient through treatment can help him or her feel confident. Dental hygienists, as part of that health care team, can help relieve some of the treatment side effects by working to control pain and tissue damage in the oral cavity. By providing this service, and making the patient feel informed and heard, dental hygienists help build a foundation that supports well-being and quality of life.

References

1. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial

Research. Cancer Treatment and Oral Health. Available at: <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/CancerTreatment/>. Accessed March 22, 2017.

2. National Cancer Institute. About Cancer. Cancer Statistics. Available at: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/statistics>. Accessed March 22, 2017.

Patients complaining of mouthsores?



Soothe away the pain with...

G·U·M® RINCINOL®



Forms a soothing, protective barrier...

- promotes fast healing
- no stinging or burning
- alcohol and benzocaine free
- contains aloe-vera

©2007 Sunstar Americas, Inc. P0716 0404007v1

CLICK TO
LEARN MORE

SUNSTAR

To order these products, call [1-800-528-8537](tel:1-800-528-8537)

SUNSTAR

GUM BUTLER GUIDOR

This email was sent by Sunstar Americas, Inc.
301 E. Central Rd | Schaumburg | IL | 60195