

Serious Mental Illness and Oral Health

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Serious Mental Illness and Oral Health...

...if truth be told

- **The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry 2016:**
 - 40 years of data are available... covering the disparity of oral health for people with mental illness....yet it remains a forgotten problem...
- **US Surgeon General's Report 2000:**
 - The mouth is a window to wellbeing...showing signs of nutritional deficiencies and serving as an early warning system for disease, general infection and stress

Serious Mental Illness and Oral Health

- **Despite the known overall health implications of oral health... NH Medicaid is one of 12 states that covers 2 or fewer common oral health procedures:**
 - **Limited Oral Evaluation**
 - **Tooth Extraction**
- **24 States offer 10 to 13 common oral health procedures**
- **Over 4 million people visited the ED for dental care costing 2.1 billion dollars (T. Wall 2013)**



Serious Mental Illness and Oral Health

- 1 in 5 Americans is suffering from a Mental Illness
- Persons with Mental Illness are 3.5 times more likely to suffer tooth loss or serious decay as compared to those w/o Mental Illness
- Persons w/ Eating Disorders: 5 to 7x greater rates of dental erosion
- Conclusion: Mental Illness is a serious oral health risk factor

Psychosocial Factors contributing to poor oral health

- **Persons with Mental Illness often suffer from:**
 - **Difficulty with concentration & executive functioning** (Planning/ Organizing & Completing Tasks)
 - **Feelings of worthlessness & hopelessness** (why bother)
 - **Withdrawal** (don't want to go)
 - **Cognitive deficits & distorted perceptions**
 - **Poverty & lack of social supports**

Iatrogenic effects of psychiatric medicine

- **Many Psychiatric Medicines cause dry mouth (Xerostomia) resulting in:**
 - Cavities, gingivitis and periodontal disease
- **35 to 45% of patients suffer dry mouth on:**
 - Antidepressants: Prozac, Wellbutrin, Zoloft
 - Antimanic/Mood Stabilizers: Lithium, Tegretol
 - Anxiolytics/ Benzodiazepines: Ativan, Xanax
 - Antipsychotics: Seroquel, Risperidone
- **Often there is 30 to 50% reduction in saliva flow before patients complain**

Other contributing factors for poor oral health among persons with mental illness

- **Use of carbonated sugary drinks in an effort to relieve dry mouth**
- **Tobacco Smoking:**
 - **36% of adults with MI smoke vs 20% of adults without MI**
 - **Persons with MH are tend to be heavy smokers as they consume 31 % of all cigarettes smoked.**
 - **45-65% of people with MI have a co-occurring Substance Use Disorder, which contributes further to dry mouth and increased functional impairment.**

Overall health and Psychosocial Vulnerabilities

- **Secondary to bacteremia and inflammation, persons with mental illness have an increase risk for:**
 - **Pain**
 - **Serious oral diseases including Cancer**
 - **Cardiovascular disease**
 - **Chronic lung disease/ respiratory illnesses**
 - **Eating and speech difficulties**
 - **Unsightly dentition exacerbating social isolation, under employment and unemployment.**

What can be done??

- **Policy/ State/ Public Health Level:**
 - Establish a comprehensive Medicare & Medicaid dental benefit
 - Sustain or expand community water fluoridation
 - Conduct basic screening surveys
 - Train dentists on meeting the unique treatment needs of persons with mental illness and integrate care

What else can be done??

- **On the psychiatric provider level:**
 - **Conduct basic screenings:**
 - Registered with a dentist and last visit
 - If none – what stopped the person from going
 - Teeth brushing
 - Do you have one...How new?
 - How often do you generally brush and floss?
 - History of oral health
 - Current/ recent pain and how managed
 - **Education and compassionate support**
 - **Support local Oral Health Programs (FY 18 MHCGM invested \$30K in The CMC Poisson Dental Clinic for Persons w/ Serious Mental Illness & SUD)**

Failure to act leaves a person very
much at risk

