



Dental Intelligence

Top 10 Oral Health News Articles in 2012

“Why should I invest in dental coverage? Isn’t my medical policy enough?” Consumers and small-group employers frequently ask these questions of brokers today. When states introduce their Exchanges, these questions are sure to increase as more consumers will be making decisions about their own dental coverage. Having a current knowledge about the importance of oral health as it relates to overall health can be extremely beneficial in demonstrating the value of dental benefits.

Each year researchers discover more about oral health. According to NADP SmartBrief*, the weekly eNewsletter for news affecting the dental benefits industry, the following are the 2012 top 10 news articles highlighting the role oral health plays in overall health. Counting down to number one, here are the summaries of these articles:

10. Study links eating disorders to poor oral health

Patients with anorexia or bulimia are more likely to have dental problems including severe erosion, burning tongue and dry mouth, according to researchers at the University of Bergen in Norway. However, plaque and gingival bleeding were significantly lower among eating disorder patients, possibly due to more vigorous oral hygiene in the group, the researchers said. Early detection of eating disorders can help patients recover, and dentists should make themselves aware of the symptoms, the researchers said. (**DentalTribune.com**)

9. Researchers link oral bacteria to clots, heart condition

An oral bacteria called *Streptococcus gordonii* can enter the bloodstream through diseased gums and cause a rare cardiac condition called infective endocarditis, according to researchers who will present their findings at a microbiology conference. The bacteria causes clots in which it can evade the immune system and antibiotics. The researchers hope to develop treatments to prevent the clots. (**The Daily Mail ,London**)

8. Millions of low-income children receive no dental care

Medicaid covers dental care for low-income children, but many dentists do not participate in the program because reimbursement rates do not cover the cost of services, says Frank Catalanotto of the University of Florida, Gainesville, Community Dentistry. (**From ABC News**)

7. Periodontal therapy might curb diabetes costs

Diabetes patients with gum disease who received periodontal therapy followed by two years of gum health maintenance had lower annual per-patient medical costs and 33% less hospitalizations than those who did not undergo periodontal treatment, a study presented at an American Association for Dental Research meeting found. The findings suggest treating gum disease may help people with diabetes prevent further complications, researchers said. (**HealthDay News**)



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6. *Electronic tattoo could warn of dental decay*

Scientists at Princeton and Tufts universities are testing a graphene-based sensor that can be "tattooed" on a tooth and detect harmful bacteria. (**Popular Science**)

5. *Less than half of dentists seal children's molars*

The American Dental Association recommends that dentists seal the chewing surfaces of 6-year molars, but less than 40% of dentists follow the guidelines, a Temple University study found. Resin-based sealants can reduce cavities, but if they are not applied properly, they can fail and promote decay, one expert says. Pediatric dentists are more likely than general dentists or hygienists to apply sealants to children's teeth. (**MSNBC Vitals Blog**)

4. *Study links dental coverage and oral health*

About three-quarters of adults surveyed by the CDC said their oral health was either good or very good, 17% said their oral health was fair and 7% said their oral health was poor. People on Medicaid were five times more likely to have poor oral health and were two times more likely not to have visited a dentist in more than five years than those who had private insurance. About 60% had been to a dentist in the past year, and cost was the most common reason for not having had recent dental care. (**Vital and Health Statistics**)

3. *Study links mobile phone use with salivary flow*

People who used mobile phones longer than two hours a day showed 26% more parotid salivation on the side where they typically held the phone than the nondominant side, while people who talked on cell phones less than two hours a day showed 8% more salivary flow rate on the dominant side than on the nondominant side, a study published in the journal Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology found. Heavy mobile phone use can induce "functional and volumetric changes ... in parotid glands," the researchers concluded. (**Dr.Bicuspid.com**)

2. *Research finds link between dental X-rays, risk of brain tumors*

Individuals who had panorex dental X-rays before they turned 10 faced almost five times the risk of developing meningioma than those who had the procedure at any other time, while patients who had the screening frequently and at any age faced three times the risk of having the brain tumor compared with those who never had a panorex exam, researchers reported in the journal Cancer. However, some of the study subjects received dental X-rays in the 1960s, when radiation exposure was higher. (**Washington Post Check-Up Blog**)



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1. Study finds no link between gum and heart diseases

There is no conclusive evidence that untreated periodontal disease causes cardiovascular disease or stroke, an analysis of more than 500 studies found. But conditions share common risk factors, and neither should be neglected. (**Circulation , American Heart Association**)

*The NADP SmartBrief is a weekly e-Newsletter that publishes the top news articles from a variety of media outlets.

About NADP

The National Association of Dental Plans (NADP), a Texas nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Dallas, Texas, is the “representative and recognized resource of the dental benefits industry.” NADP is the only national trade organization that includes the full spectrum of dental benefits companies operating in the United States. NADP’s members provide Dental HMO, Dental PPO, Dental Indemnity and Discount Dental products to 160 million Americans, 90% of all Americans with dental benefits. For more updates on the dental benefits industry subscribe to the weekly e-newsletter, NADP SmartBrief via www.nadp.org.