

The Importance of Oral Healthcare: How a Lack of Education is endangering both Oral and General Health Levels

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05/05/14 — The Importance of Oral Healthcare: How a Lack of Education is endangering both Oral and General Health Levels

While recent statistics suggest that the global economy is continuing along an upward trend, this reported growth has yet to impact

fully on the majority of everyday households. The result of this is that many citizens continue to struggle with a paucity of disposable income, which in turn forces them to make difficult decisions concerning expenditure.

Given the surprising lack of financial literacy among Western civilians, however, it is little wonder that most households struggle to effectively prioritize their financial obligations. The fact that just 35% of American adults visited a dentist last year provides a relevant example, as while such a practice costs money its benefits more than repay this over time.

The Truth behind the Headlines: How Wealth Impacts on Patient Behavior and Decision Making

This statistic, which emerged from a Gallup-Healthways Well-being Index

survey, reinforces the fact that the vast majority of American adults fail to recognize the true importance of oral healthcare. The report canvassed the opinion of more than 178,000 respondents, with one-in-three claiming that they had not been to see a dental practitioner during the previous twelve month period. This is of grave concern for public healthcare officials in the U.S., primarily because the lack of importance placed on oral healthcare is likely to have a serious impact on the next generation of adults.

The report also offered an insight into how personal finances impact on patient behavior when it comes to scheduling dental visits. More specifically, respondents who earned more were far more likely to visit their local dental practitioner than those who lived on lower income streams, especially individuals who earned a minimum of \$120,000 per year. Members of this demographic were twice as likely to have visited their dentist in 2013 as those who earned than \$12,000 during the financial year, for example, and the frequency of visits also correlated strongly with annual earnings.



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Understanding Modern Patient Behavior and Challenging Philosophies

At first glance, these statistics may simply underline the fact that the privatized nature of dental care prevents low-income patients from investing in regular visits. Such a simplified outlook negates the sheer importance of oral healthcare, however, a

nd its capacity to help recipients to maintain a greater level of physical fitness and general well-being. Several recent studies have identified the potential link between oral disease and the onset of debilitating conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, atherosclerosis and even heart complaints.

The results of these reports have been widely publicized, which means that low-income citizens are well aware of the cons

equences that may follow if they neglect their oral health. So even accounting for their paucity of disposable income, they are executing financial decisions that do not take into account the data at their disposal or the long-term costs that may be associated with corrective surgery or prescribed medication. This suggests that the primary issue centers on a fundamental lack of education and understanding rather than a simple dearth of available funds.

How to Tackle this Gap in Knowledge and Effect Change

Regardless of whether patients simply underestimate the importance of oral healthcare or struggle to fully comprehend the processes that surround financial decision making; however, these obvious gaps in knowledge are likely to impact on both present and future generations. This is why public health organizations and proactive dental practitioners such as Dr. Andrew Hall DMD have such a pivotal role to play in effecting change, as they have the capacity to influence patients, challenge their thought processes and reinforce the practical and financial benefits of making regular trips to a local dentist.

Without this, there is serious danger that the current and next generation of American adults will become increasingly vulnerable to a host of troubling health concerns.

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