



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

September 10, 2008

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Oral Cancer Awareness Could Change Current Figures

OAK BROOK, ILL – Oral cancer is often excluded from public awareness, but recent statistics reveal the consequences that may be in store for an uninformed society. The effects of oral cancer include face and neck disfigurements that impact the ability to eat, speak and breathe. The Oral Cancer Foundation states that about 34,000 Americans will suffer from oral cancer this year and approximately 8,000 will die because of it. This averages out to one death per hour each day.

In addition, the five-year survival rate of people with oral cancer has remained at 57 percent over the past 40 years. This statistic demonstrates that oral cancer is not being detected early enough to be properly treated. One reason may be public unawareness.

“At Delta Dental, we want the public to be as familiar with the dangers of oral cancer as they are with breast, colon or cervical cancer,” says Jed J. Jacobson, D.D.S, senior vice president and chief science officer of Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

In the past, oral cancer was found most commonly among men, adults over 40, African Americans, smokers and frequent alcohol drinkers. However, women, young adults and people who do not smoke or drink excessively are now at risk as well.

A 2007 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by Johns Hopkins University may point to an explanation for this shift in trends. After completing the study of 100 newly diagnosed oral and pharyngeal cancer patients and 200 cancer-free control subjects, results demonstrated an association between the human papilloma virus (HPV) and oral cancer among those for whom smoking and drinking factors were and were not applicable. HPV is a known risk factor for cervical cancer.

According to Jacobson, recognizing the signs and symptoms of oral cancer is essential to beginning treatment. “Early detection of oral cancer not only saves lives, but also has the potential to significantly reduce medical treatment costs,” he says. “Oral cancer is one of the most expensive forms to treat, with an advanced case costing upward of \$200,000 for direct medical costs.” Common symptoms are unexplained red or white spots in the mouth, lumps in the mouth or neck and swelling of the tongue or throat.

Quick and painless, oral cancer exams assess the head, neck, mouth, gums, throat and tongue. Jacobson suggests that patients have a discussion regarding HPV with their dentist.

Delta Dental Plans Association, based in Oak Brook, Ill. is a national network of independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 51 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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