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California Dental Hygienists' Association
The Voice of Dental Hygiene

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ORAL CANCER ON THE RISE AMONG NON-SMOKERS UNDER 50
California Dental Hygienists' Association Urges Routine Office Screenings

GLENDALE, Calif. (Jan. 6, 2011) – To quit smoking and drinking remain worthy and recommended public health resolutions for 2011 but they are not enough to prevent oral cancer, the [California Dental Hygienists' Association](#) (CDHA) warned today.

“Tobacco and alcohol use are no longer the only major risk factors for [oral cancer](#),” reports Ellen Standley, CDHA President. “The fastest growing segment of oral cancer victims is the non-smoker under 50 years of age.”

The latest statistics indicate that over the next decade, exposure to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) will likely replace tobacco as the main causative agent for oral cancer, according to the latest research. The HPV positive group, specifically the strain responsible for cervical cancer, is a rapidly growing segment of the oral cancer population. This new high-risk group includes persons under 40 who have never smoked or abused alcohol.

Registered Dental Hygienists play a front-line role in the battle against oral cancers, which kill more than 8,000 Americans each year even though such diseases are usually treated successfully when detected early.

“Because of this we are more emphatic than ever about the need for screenings and early detection efforts during routine dental visits,” Standley said. “And we are advocating that patients adopt a number of preventive measures to help reduce their risk for developing oral cancer.”

CDHA credits the “Michael Douglas Factor” with helping to raise awareness about the disease; the famous actor has been extremely vocal in discussing his recently diagnosed oral cancer.

To further public education, CDHA recommends Californians understand the following information and prevention tips.

Key Facts:

- 36,000 new cases of oral cancer are reported annually; that number continues to grow
- There are 8,000 deaths due to oral cancer per year

- Most of the cases of oral cancer are discovered in later stages, with only a 50% survival rate after five years
- When discovered in early stages, treatment has up to a 90% survival rate
- Tobacco, alcohol and human papilloma virus are risk factors

Prevention Tips:

- Visit a dental office and be screened at least once a year for oral cancer. Dental hygienists have the opportunity to provide quick, painless and simple oral cancer screenings whenever they see a patient.
- See a physician once a year for a routine physical examination
- Limit alcohol consumption and all types of tobacco use, including smokeless
- Avoid behaviors that promote exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Limit exposure to UV radiation (lip cancer)
- Be suspicious of any sore in the mouth or any change in the tissue (color or texture) that lasts longer than two weeks
- Be proactive & take preventive measures in your healthcare; ask questions

“We hope that 2011 will be a breakthrough year for the public’s understanding of oral cancer,” Standley said. “With a few simple steps, and earlier detection, a lot of lives can be saved.”

For more information, please visit the following web sites: www.oralcancerfoundation.org; www.nidcr.nih.gov; www.hygienetown.com

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The California Dental Hygienists’ Association (CDHA) is the authoritative voice of the state’s dental hygiene profession. The organization was established 25 years ago when two regional associations merged to form a unified professional group. CDHA represents thousands of dental hygienists