



INSTITUTE FOR

Oral Health

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whitepaper

2010 conference

Oral Health in Healthcare Reform

October 28 & 29, 2010

Scottsdale, Arizona



:: excerpt ::

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Introduction

“We can’t continue to provide more expensive medical and dental care. We have to be able to provide less expensive and more effective dental care. Really that’s about delivery system reform; it’s not about payment or insurance reform.”

–Dr. Michael Helgeson

This year’s landmark healthcare reform signals positive change, but it also spotlights glaring weaknesses in our nation’s healthcare system. Millions of Americans have no access to affordable quality dental care, and the dental profession lacks the workforce, training, and technology to effectively support the rapid growth in high-risk populations such as children, aging adults, and people with diabetes. So what happens next?

For the past four years, Institute for Oral Health (IOH) has focused on raising awareness about oral health concerns for these key populations, exploring progressive solutions to help advance dental care access, treatment, and delivery. In 2010, IOH addressed the theme of “**Oral Health in Healthcare Reform**,” with an in-depth look at what’s needed in healthcare reform and everyday dental practice to better support underserved populations. Additionally, we explored strategies for integration between dental and medical through collaborative practice models and information technology advancements that help drive evidence-based standards and treatment protocols to support more successful outcomes in both oral health and overall patient health.

The October 2010 Institute for Oral Health Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona provided many valuable insights and promising solutions to advance oral health. With nationally recognized leaders in healthcare reform and top authorities in clinical practice, dental education, health benefits and health record technologies, this year’s event highlighted a number of critical considerations, such as:

- **Expanding the role of dentistry** – From the economic challenges of supporting the expansion of Medicaid programs to provide care for 32 million more people, to the exciting new provisions that will promote prevention and early caries detection in millions of children, the Affordable Care Act provides many opportunities for dentistry to play a bigger role in the healthcare system.
- **Addressing workforce challenges** – As reform introduces new levels of need in the dental workforce, our system continues to battle with a lack of providers well trained to meet the unique needs of underserved populations such as aging adults and people with disabilities. In particular, with the wave of “boomers” reaching retirement age, our nation is facing an urgent need for more geriatric dentists. On a positive note, the reform bill includes provisions for numerous educational grants that could support better training for new and existing dental providers on special needs care.
- **Increasing effectiveness with collaborative care models** – The overwhelming consensus on healthcare reform is that both medical and dental will need to develop ways to deliver quality care at a lower cost. Several progressive delivery models were highlighted that focus on team-based care that brings together medical, dental and other caregivers with community partners to make access easier, reduce costs, increase efficiencies, and improve health outcomes for people who need care the most.
- **Advancing quality using electronic health records** – While electronic medical records have been in place for decades, emerging technology advancements are creating a place for dental to support

better integration with medicine. These tools provide opportunities for the critical data collection that drives quality measurements, performance analysis, and the development of evidence-based best practices.

- **Improving health outcomes for diabetics** – As increasing evidence supports the connection between periodontal disease and diabetes, dentists need to actively participate in helping diabetic patients control and manage both diseases. Calls to action include proactive risk assessments and dental provider education on diabetes, as well as close collaboration with physicians to partner on strategic treatment plans and early detection.

Looking Ahead to 2011

Oral Health and Prevention: Rebranding the Profession

October 27 & 28, 2011

Chicago, Illinois ~ Sofitel Hotel Water Tower

In 2011, the Institute for Oral Health will focus on prevention. We will collaborate with experts in focus groups and participate in national events to learn the latest in preventive strategies for improving health. 2011 will be an exciting year – stay tuned and please join us in Chicago!



About the Institute for Oral Health

The Institute for Oral Health is dedicated to improving oral health in America by bridging the gap between research and everyday dental practice. Serving as a central resource for education and collaboration, IOH brings together nationally recognized experts to focus on important themes of concern in oral health care today, and works to promote innovation and adoption of progressive treatment guidelines, dental plans, and delivery methods.

Join the Conversation

IOH encourages everyone to get involved and share their insights and feedback about important oral health topics and healthcare reform:

IOH Web: IOHWA.ORG



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Joel Berg, DDS, MS

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Efficient Care and Training in Pediatric Dentistry in an Academic Health Center

To provide the most cost-effective dental care for a large population of children, efficiencies need to be brought into practice at every level. At the 2010 Institute for Oral Health conference, Dr. Joel Berg discussed the development of the innovative Center for Pediatric Dentistry in Seattle, Washington, which opened in September 2010. With an integrated plan of construction design and patient flow, all focused toward efficiency, The Center was developed to bring the highest level care to thousands of patients in an academic health center environment.

Dr. Berg also discussed how The Center for Pediatric Dentistry has used technology to increase efficiencies, and introduced their plans for future technology. He emphasized that best practices developed within the The Center can be distributed to programs and clinics elsewhere to provide more efficient quality outcomes for children across the globe.

Caries as a Medical Disease

Dr. Berg began by highlighting the urgency of advancing dental care for children, both in our nation and around the world. He emphasized that one of the greatest challenges dentistry has yet to overcome is that, in terms of caries, dentists typically treat the results of the disease rather than the disease itself. We need a paradigm shift in how we look at caries so our approach is proactive and preventive, rather than reactive with the “drill and fill” approach that has been going on since the beginning of dentistry hundreds, even thousands of years ago.

Around the world, from emerging powers like China and underdeveloped villages of Peru, changes in diet and lack of access to preventive dental care are causing a rising crisis in childhood caries. However, even more noteworthy is that the problem is worse here at home where quality dental care is often readily accessible. In large part, Dr. Berg believes, it is because the common attitude is that cavities are simply a “nuisance” to be dealt with after they arise. But often they are a precursor to very severe oral health complications that are extremely painful for children and very costly for families and the healthcare system. If instead we view caries as a disease, we could invest in closely tracking the process of how caries develops and progresses over time, and thus, better support patients and predict the trajectory of their oral health.

“Caries is not just a nuisance, it’s a crisis. We have an endless backlog of kids who need to be treated under general anesthesia. We can’t drill our way out of this problem. We have to figure out the cause of the problem and treat that.”

–Dr. Joel Berg

Dr. Berg noted that much of the problem could be avoided by seeing children earlier to set the stage for better oral health. With alarming frequency, children who at age one had perfectly healthy teeth have a “devastating caries problem” by age two or three. Pediatric dentists are now looking toward innovations in caries detection tools:

“We need to focus on caries risk assessments to identify early on who is at risk and why; have more aggressive interventions at an early age, test those inventions, and have feedback with these technologies to assess the reduction in risk to improve the outcome in those children.”

The good news is that the problems of oral health are gaining visibility. In 2008, the American Academy of Pediatrics cited oral health as one of the top three most neglected needs in children’s healthcare, stating, “*dental caries is the most common chronic disease affecting children in the United States.*”

Effective Collaboration to Solve the Problem

To make a substantial difference in the early childhood caries crisis, Dr. Berg and his colleagues sparked an initiative to bring together medical and dental for delivering the most efficient and cost-effective system of care, while delivering an optimal experience that addresses the many needs of children and parents before, during, and after a typical dental visit. Their vision, The Center for Pediatric Dentistry, was planned and developed leveraging Seattle’s numerous pediatricians invested in oral health, in partnership with the University of Washington School of Dentistry and Seattle Children’s Hospital, as well as a \$5 million grant from Washington Dental Service and their Foundation.

Also an academic health center, The Center for Pediatric Dentistry (CDP), works to train and mentor pediatric dentists and clinicians on both progressive treatment and prevention education strategies, to promote healthier behaviors across entire families. To keep their agenda on track, The Center aligns their efforts with a core mission and vision:

- **Mission** – To improve oral health of infants and toddlers through research, education, service delivery, and public policy.
- **Vision** – To be recognized throughout the world as the leader in early childhood oral health, and as a result of our work, dramatically mitigate the unmet need in the management of childhood caries.

Bringing the Vision to Life

As part of the initiative to develop an innovative academic health center for pediatric care to better serve the community, Dr. Berg envisions The Center as a “living lab”, a virtual community that brings together stakeholders from dental services, research, education, fundraising development, and public policy –with cross-collaboration to promote the greatest efficiency and effectiveness for both patients and providers.

As The Center’s collective team recognizes they may find answers to the problem outside the dental system, they integrate mindshare and expertise from multiple disciplines. Dr. Berg offered an excellent example, highlighting an opportune meeting with an engineer who invented an endoscopic camera that can be swallowed to deliver high-resolution images of the esophagus, stomach, and more. After discussing the camera’s potential for detecting early caries lesions, the inventor applied for and received a grant to enable The Center for Pediatric Dentistry to investigate this camera as a potential solution for dentistry.

“\$60 billion a year is drilling and filling. That’s 60% of all of dentistry. Very little of that is preventing and managing caries, most of it is surgical aspects. There’s a real opportunity to shift that, and that’s what we’ve set out to do.”

–Dr. Joel Berg

“We plan to see over 40,000 children a year, yet that’s only a tiny dent in the problem. Through our research, our systems, our efficiencies— we hope to get everyone thinking about how we can care for more children in all venues around the country and around the world.”

–Dr. Joel Berg

The new academic health facility, located in Seattle, Washington, is one of the largest of its kind in the country, supporting 29 patient chairs, three operating rooms, a wing for faculty dental practice, and extensive office space for administration, staff, and other support functions. Additionally, they have engaged ergonomic specialists to help them identify the most effective care setting to accommodate the challenges of young patients, and provide a comfortable place for the parents to be present nearby.

The Center also strives to be the best educational environment for integrated training for not only future dentists but also other healthcare providers including general pediatricians to increase their competence in assessing caries risk in babies and toddlers. In those early years, pediatricians typically see children more often than a dentist does, yet as children grow older, they tend to see the dentist more often than a pediatrician. As such, through collaborative knowledge sharing, together medical and dental providers can promote better health outcomes in children.

Providing Optimal Efficiencies for Families

The Center for Pediatric Dentistry has focused on “every touch-point with a patient to make it the most efficient system possible.” Their strategies for optimizing the parent and patient experience include:

- **Enhanced new patient registration** – To generate interest and motivate dental visits, The Center will send a “Welcome Information Packet” that includes directions for how to get to the new facility, what to expect, a newsletter, and even other activities of interest at the nearby waterfront park.
- **Convenient visit reminders** - To remind parents about visits and facilitate quicker check-in, The Center calls two days in advance and advises the parent on what to bring, etc.
- **Personalized greeting & check-in assistance** – Trained dental student volunteers greet families and help them with check in, introduce the facility and escort them right up to chair-side.
- **Self check-in kiosks** – The Center will soon offer self-check-in kiosks for returning patients. Additionally, The Center’s website will enable families to register as subscribers to allow The Center to track patient dental needs and important information.
- **Scheduling system for patient chairs** - To reduce waiting-room time, The Center uses an efficient scheduling system to triage patients based on recall visits, restorative treatment, special needs, and so on.
- **Paging system for families** - To best support both families and providers, a paging system will alert families when the dental clinician is ready for them, and keep them informed if they need to go outside while they wait.
- **Social worker support** – To meet a spectrum of childhood and parenting needs that may create barriers to getting care, The Center partners with social workers to provide support or necessary interventions.
- **Children’s play and education areas** – To create fun diversions for kids waiting on appointments, The Center plans on offering a play area with videos, books, reading instruction, and computer access.

Maximizing Efficiencies for Providers

Along with their primary goal to make the patient family experience fun, engaging, and comfortable, The Center for Pediatric Dentistry is also highly focused on optimizing efficiencies to make the

provider experience more effective as well. In developing the center, they focused on implementing technologies and systems that would support both near and long-term needs, being scalable enough to accommodate technology advancements down the line. As a new, carefully planned facility, The Center benefits from a state-of-the-art infrastructure to increase the efficiency and immediacy of everything related to dental treatment, such as over-the-patient monitors that can both entertain children during procedures and through sophisticated networking, deliver instant access of digital radiology to any chairside.

Additional efficiency solutions for providers and the facility include:

- **Electronic Health Record (EHR)** – The Center is aiming to leverage technological advancements as much as possible, including electronic health records that provide improved treatment planning, and effective tracking of dental data to measure services, outcomes, and performance.
- **Standardized instrument sets** – Organized based on the type of dental appointment, instruments “cassettes” will be barcoded and entered into a patient’s EHR. Additionally, to keep inventory manageable and affordable, they will maintain a core set of instruments that work best for the majority of cases, with a centralized system for sterilizing and barcoding, and a system for automatic ordering and tracking vendors.
- **Interconnectivity for all equipment** – To streamline efforts in managing a diverse array of electronic equipment, The Center is employing a universally consistent system (currently USB) to enable all components to easily connect in the same simple way to their computers.
- **Just-in-time consumables management** – The Center includes a well organized storage and delivery system to reduce on-hand consumable items, ensuring no costs are wasted with aged or expired goods, and more space is available for active patient care needs.
- **Paging system for providers** - To optimize communications across all staff, The Center will be implementing the most efficient paging system available to enable more fluid communication across team members in different locations and allow for more immediate notification of any instrument or urgent needs.

Proving the Value with Quality Measurements

While creating an environment optimized for patient experience and efficient care is an admirable agenda, the highest value comes when The Center can provide evidence that they are in fact improving patient outcomes. From those quality and performance measures, they can define evidence-based best practices, which can be implemented by other organizations as well.

The Center for Pediatric Dentistry is engaging experts to help them develop monitors to measure technical excellence, improved patient outcomes, and reduction in oral diseases.

“We’re looking to experts to criticize what we’re doing, challenge us to collect that data, develop the best measures for outcomes that we can define, and measure them in every child. We can then enroll kids in different methods of treatment to see what works and what doesn’t.”

Additionally, no assessment of quality care would be complete without factoring in patient satisfaction. As well as patient surveys, The Center is proactively building customer experience service excellence into their training programs for all staff.

Extending the Vision with Community Outreach

Like many heavily populated areas throughout the U.S., the greater Seattle region has many thousands of underserved children who need dental care. And while The Center is striving to support as many families as possible with high quality, cost-effective services, they have a finite capacity. But they do not let that limitation stop their higher goal of improving early childhood oral health. The Center engages in numerous outreach efforts with community centers, private practices, and others to promote the importance of oral health and caries prevention. Dr. Berg emphasized that the dental profession needs to strongly market the message to encourage families to bring children to the dentist in their earliest years to help identify, treat, and prevent disease before greater problems arise.

Outreach needs innovation as well. Dr. Berg noted that people often take notice and remember messaging heard on the radio or TV far more than reminders from their healthcare provider. As such, the dental profession needs to be inventive in reaching consumers, engage today's families in ways that tap into their everyday lives and that speak in a voice they understand. Tomorrow's outreach involves collaboration across industries—from oral health practitioners to dental product providers to media outlets—as a critical measure to get families thinking about making oral health a top priority for their children.

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"As part of better medical management of caries, we need better ways to reach consumers. We want our 'brand' to be: You can be cavity free—go to the dentist at age one—prevent the disease for life."
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—Dr. Joel Berg

