

Title: To Floss or not to floss; that is the question

Recommendations to floss were removed from the 2015 dietary guidelines, developed every five years, by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) (1). As such; flossing is no longer considered a valid tool in the prevention of gingival, periodontal diseases, and dental caries (2). As dental hygienists, we were taught, and have observed, the benefits of flossing on a daily basis. Yet we find, after this expose, that data supporting flossing was either clinically weak or biased (1).

It is understood, from dental hygiene education, that a total biofilm control program used in the prevention and reduction of periodontal diseases and caries, includes “debris removal by tooth brushing, flossing, and other aids” (3 pg. 294). Flossing has also been reinforced with patients to prevent the return of plaque and calculus formation after therapeutic scaling (3). Controlling bacteria laden plaque biofilm was found most effective when there was a physical disruption such as brushing, flossing, and periodontal instrumentation (4).

In response to this government announcement, this survey study will evaluate practicing dental hygienists’ knowledge and awareness about the evidence behind flossing and their attitudes about the ODPHP report. The study will also examine how and where practicing dental hygienists search for information and how they determine the strength and validity of the evidence they gather about topics such as flossing. This survey will be sent to the current database of practicing South Texas dental hygienists who are members of the Texas Dental Hygiene Association.

The value of this study is in reporting important data about clinical observations by dental hygienists of South Texas. It is also important to understand how effective practicing dental hygienists are in pursuing valid, non-biased evidence-based, data to support their flossing recommendations. The data from this study will be gathered, analyzed and returned to the SToHN participants.

- 1) <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f7e66079d9ba4b4985d7af350619a9e3/medical-benefits-dental-floss-unproven> (9/22/2016)
- 2) <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/> (9/22/2016)
- 3) BS, Esther M W., RDH, DMD. Clinical Practice of the Dental Hygienist, 11th Edition. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 01/2012. VitalBook file.
- 4) MA, Jill S Nield-Gehrig R., Donald E Willmann, MS. *Foundations of Periodontics for the Dental Hygienist, 3rd Edition*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. VitalBook file.