Putting the Mouth Back in the Head: HEENT to HEENOT

Oral health is all too often considered the arena of dentists and dental hygienists and is therefore often ignored by non-dental healthcare providers. However, with the increased understanding of the oral-systemic connection comes the urgent need for ALL healthcare providers to include the oral cavity as an intrinsic part of a patient’s overall health management.

To raise awareness about oral health as a major public health issue and to provide an educational and clinical tool to increase oral health care access, our OHNEP and TOSH teams have published an article in the *American Journal of Public Health* (available online ahead of print), “Putting the Mouth Back in the Head: HEENT to HEENOT.”

Transitioning the traditional HEENT exam to the HEENOT approach (head, eyes, ears, neck, oral cavity and throat) is a natural progression of the head-to-toe physical exam.

The OHNEP Interprofessional Oral Health Faculty Toolkit

There are over 196,000 nurse practitioners (NPs), 13,000 nurse-midwives (NMs) and 3 million registered nurses (RNs) in the U.S. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Projections 2012-2022 released in December 2013, the RN workforce is expected to grow from 2.71 million in 2012 to 3.24 million by 2022.

The projected dramatic increase in the nursing workforce, coupled with the gap in access to oral health care and the growing body of evidence showing that oral and systemic health are intrinsically linked, emphasizes the need for NPs, midwives and nurses to step up to the frontline of integrating oral health in primary care.

To equip nurses with interprofessional oral health competencies, OHNEP has developed the *Interprofessional Oral Health Faculty Toolkit* for pediatric, adult-geriatric, women’s health, family, psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner and midwifery programs.


The Toolkit is an innovative, web-based, open source product intended to facilitate integration of oral-systemic health content and clinical competencies into nurse practitioner and midwifery curricula so that nursing students learn to assess, manage and refer patients for oral care within their scope of practice.

Nursing programs can use the “weave” approach to integrate evidence-based oral-systemic health content, teaching-learning strategies, and clinical experiences into existing programs, thus breaking down existing silos in healthcare and providing patients with a more integrated and team-based experience.

The Toolkit integrates oral health into courses in health assessment, health promotion and primary care. It includes readings, assignments and collaborative case studies, simulations and service learning as well as other important oral health resources.

The Toolkit will be available in early 2015 through the OHNEP website ([www.ohnep.org](http://www.ohnep.org)).
Healthy People 2020 Module on Oral Health

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identified oral health as one of the 10 leading health indicators. It is no surprise then that seventeen of the Healthy People 2020 objectives relate directly to oral health and a number of others emphasize the connection between oral and chronic diseases.

OHNEP in partnership with the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) and Temple University College of Public Health created the Oral Health Across the Lifespan Module, one of a 15-modules series. The module introduces learners to the Healthy People 2020 Oral Health goals and objectives as well as strategies for achieving them.

Easily integrated into existing curricula, the module includes PowerPoint slides, video lectures, transcripts, quiz questions, in-class activities, discussion questions, and resources. The multimedia learning modules are a new resource to facilitate the goals of integrating Healthy People 2020 concepts into the curriculum of public health and health professions programs and schools.

Teaching Oral-Systemic Health (TOSH)

The aim of the Teaching Oral-Systemic Health (TOSH) Program is to produce a workforce that is collaborative practice ready to integrate interprofessional oral health competencies into their clinical practice. TOSH accomplishes this aim by engaging future primary care providers in interprofessional, oral-systemic health clinical experiences.

Research continues to demonstrate a relationship between oral health and overall health. Because diabetes, celiac disease, heart and lung diseases, STIs and even some cancers can manifest orally, it is important for clinicians to use a team-based approach in order to (1) increase oral health access (2) reduce oral health disparities and (3) improve oral-systemic health outcomes.

The TOSH website contains many resources for implementing interprofessional education (IPE) programs and facilitating team-based learning. It includes an IPE faculty toolkit, evaluation tools, ice breakers, and continuing education resources. Please visit us at www.TOSHteam.org to learn more.

All 4 Oral Health Blog

Join the conversation about important, timely oral health topics of interest and action on our new blog, All 4 Oral Health, a joint effort by the OHNEP and TOSH programs. Expect pieces from expert guest bloggers, calls-for-action and posts advocating for improved oral health in special needs populations. We look forward to an exciting discussion!