

Truett: Dr. Conicella, from your perspective, as Aetna's Chief Dental Officer, why is it important for our readers to attend the symposium?

Conicella: Aetna believes that it is vital to influence improved patient care through collaborative practice – not just among dentists and physicians, but among all members of the medical and oral health team (hygienists, nurses, physicians' assistants, etc.). This is one of the symposium's goals. Our support for integration has been informed by significant amounts of data from Aetna members; and we hope others will adopt innovative approaches as a result of the research and practices shared at the symposium.

Truett: If this third symposium could realize one important practical outcome, what would that be?

Conicella: Outcomes that would be promising from Aetna's perspective would be finding that medical and dental professionals have an increased recognition that integrated health care results in informed and involved patients, and that clinicians will adopt practice patterns that include cross-referrals on a regular basis. We believe that collaboration can improve health outcomes.

Truett: What is Aetna's philosophy about the periodontal/inflammation/diabetes disease linkage?

Conicella: Aetna's philosophy emerges from our 2006 study of 116,000 people who were enrolled in both our medical and dental health plans. The results illustrated a lower risk score for both diabetes and coronary artery disease among people who received treatment for periodontal disease. As a result of these findings, we established the Dental Medical Integration (DMI) program to help members control their diabetes, improve their health and lower the cost of managing their disease. For example, Aetna reaches out to diabetic members, reminding them to schedule an appointment with their dentist.

We also added benefits to reduce the potential access-to-care barrier of out-of-pocket costs. Among our DMI members, those who are now going to the dentist have significantly better diabetes management compared to two control groups, measured by blood glucose levels. These interventions are working and diabetic patients receiving appropriate dental care are continuing to do better!

Aetna is proud to sponsor our 3rd symposium at the New York Academy of Sciences. We encourage medical and dental professionals to attend this important program, and we look forward to seeing the proceedings published in the NYAS Annals.

Join us on May 4th to hear noted speakers from the fields of medical and oral health discuss new ideas research and ideas regarding the relationship between oral health and diabetes including a keynote address, "The Diabetes Epidemic," presented by William C. Knowler, MD, PhD, MPH Chief, Diabetes and Arthritis

***Epidemiology Section, Phoenix Epidemiology and Clinical Research Branch
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National
Institutes of Health.***

For our readers not able to attend the May 4th symposium, OHA will keep you apprised of NYAS' plans to publish the proceedings in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences. The publication is expected to include a consensus statement emerging from the conference and will be available in segments or in total for a fee at www.nyas.org.