

## EP. 74 Link between Perio, Diabetes, and Stroke

Have you ever had a patient that seemed surprised with your perio diagnosis? Do you still have patients who seem unconcerned about their perio condition?

**It is our obligation as health care providers to make our patients aware of the link between perio disease and other diseases, such as diabetes and stroke.**

According to Dr. Sam Low, Professor emeritus of periodontics at the University of Florida College of Dentistry, there are studies to show that rates of diabetes and stroke correspond in certain geographical areas (particularly the Southeastern region of the U.S.) and also that dental disease is more common in the so-called “stroke belt.”

In 2016, it was noted that 24% of patients age 60 and older have diabetes. Patients with Type 2 diabetes have about threefold increased odds of having periodontitis, compared with patients without diabetes.

Dr. Low also cited a study by United Concordia of 1.7 million patients. They found that “annual healthcare savings of more than \$3000 were possible when medical and pharmacy savings are combined for patients with diabetes who are treated for perio and have at least seven annual visits as part of their therapy.” He also said that, “What dentists and hygienists need to teach their patients to do is disrupt the stimulus. What patients do at home is the key, and we must make it easy and convenient for the patient to change their habits for better oral and systemic health.”

Per Dr. Low: “A patient with a healthy mouth will live, on the average, about 10 years longer.”

### **What should we as healthcare providers do?**

- Make it easy for patients to be able to be seen more often than every 6 months. Some insurances are actually paying for 3 or 4 preventive appointments a year. Ask about that during insurance benefits verification. But regardless of insurance coverage, show patient how it benefits them to invest in more appointments.
- Offer the tools for home use and show patients how to use them.
- Closely evaluate the medical history and educate your patient of the links between perio and other diseases.

Does your hygiene team have the latest information to present to patients? Do you need better tools in your treatment room? Do not assume your patients are aware of these links.