



15

MODULE 15

Oral Health Across the Lifespan

Part 1: Introduction and Oral-
Systemic Health

Hugh Silk, MD, MPH, FAAFP



Public Health
Learning Modules
Using Healthy People 2020
to Improve Population Health



ASSOCIATION FOR PREVENTION TEACHING AND RESEARCH



College of Health Professions
and Social Work
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®

Introduction and Oral-Systemic Health

In Class Activities

1. Insurance coverage – What is the Medicaid coverage in your state for adults and children?
Identify location of dentists in your community that accept Medicaid;
Identify dentists in your local community who:
 - are comfortable with young children
 - take proper time for elderly;
 - consider transportation issues for their patients
 - appreciate how dental health competes with other health needs
 - have options to help with the financing of dental services
 - address lack of understanding of importance or consequences of poor oral health
 - have strategies to address patients’ fatalistic beliefs (“I have always had poor oral health” “my family always had bad teeth”)
2. Mapping the Oral-Systemic Connection - Identify a patient with a local oral infection (eg. “toothache”). Map how the local infection, if untreated, can lead to a more serious local or systemic infection. How might this patient present in the ED, primary care office, or result in a hospital admission. Estimate the costs of the infection in relation to dental visits, ED visit, primary care visit, missed work or school.
3. Review studies on cost of oral health trips to ED and hospital including death. Also see study on saved costs with treatment from Concordia. Decreased inflammation saves money for diabetes, RA, pregnancy and coronary heart disease by needing less medication, fewer visits (likely urgent) and fewer hospitalizations. Think about how a system that is capitated might aim for these cost savings by spending some money on prevention by covering dental visits, improved dental education, and even education or transportation.

4. Think about the oral health roles for different members of the patient centered team. Identify how technology could be used to prompt and document how oral health can be integrated into the health history, physical exam, risk assessment and management plan.
5. Create a short power point presentation or position paper to convince the CEO of your health care system or hospital why addressing oral health will lead to better health outcomes at a lower cost.
6. Schematically design your ideal community health center with the goal of having all disciplines work synergistically to promote and address oral health as a part of overall health. Consider who all of the health care players are in your center and what role each person will have.