



### **Are Oral Health Status And Care Associated With Anxiety And Depression?**

Both psychiatric disease and dental disease are viewed as two of the most prevalent of all health problems that presently exist in our society today. Mental illness and the resulting disabilities associated with these diseases inflict immeasurable difficulties on the patients as well as their families and friends, not the least of which remains the highly stigmatized nature of the disease itself. What really separates mental illness from other diseases is that it does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, economic status or gender. One in five adult North Americans will suffer from some form of mental illness in any given year. A far greater percentage will not receive treatment until many years after the onset of illness. A recent W.H.O. report has now stated that depression will become the second leading cause of health impairment worldwide by the year 2020. Every oral health care practice will include patients who suffer from some form of mental illness (e.g. bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, eating disorders, anxiety disorders), even though many of these patients will appear healthy despite dealing with their on-going emotional disorder. Mental health and oral health are intertwined and can significantly impact one another. Medications used to treat various forms of mental illness interact with drugs used in dentistry. Oral health problems can arise as manifestations of mental illness as well as being side effects of numerous psychiatric medications. Finally, psychiatric disorders often lead to decreased compliance for preventive oral care. The end result can be truly devastating, particularly for younger patients.

<http://www.vicdds.ca/activities/2009/03/25/psychiatric-illness/>

Dental phobia is a severe fear of the dentist that over time causes loss of teeth because of the patients' inability to go to the dentist and receive regular care. The heart of the matter is that dental phobia can rob patients of their self esteem as they become embarrassed about the appearance of their teeth and withdraw from friends, coworkers and loved ones.

Why do people hate and fear the dentist so? Fear of the dentist is most commonly something patients learn from traumatic personal dental experiences. If these experiences occur as a child and are accompanied by a real sense of panic, the resulting reaction to the dentist may become deep seated, visceral and life long. Such patients just do not feel safe in the dental chair. Patients' recall of their traumatic childhood experiences often includes being held down against their will, being yelled at, pain and terror. A recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that people who suffer abuse as children, may have life long alterations in their response to stress. If a patient suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the dental office may be just one of many situations where such patients feel unsafe. Patients who suffer from panic attacks associated with dental care will do anything not to have that awful feeling again. Sedation, which can block the panic response, can be particularly helpful for dental patients with anxiety attacks.

[http://www.anxiety-and-depression-solutions.com/wellness\\_concerns/panic\\_attacks/121304\\_dental\\_phobia.php](http://www.anxiety-and-depression-solutions.com/wellness_concerns/panic_attacks/121304_dental_phobia.php)