

Mental health and gum disease

Panay News · 13 Sep 2022 · 7 · (By Dr. Joseph D. Lim and Dr. Kenneth Lester Lim, BS-MMG, DDM, MSc-OI)

GUM disease is bad news. Researchers at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom have found that gum disease may increase the risk of a person developing depression and anxiety.

The findings of the study are published in the December issue of the journal BMJ Open. They also found that a history of gum disease may increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes. It may increase as well the risk of developing diseases caused by a compromised immune system.

The researchers examined the medical history of more than 64,000 people with a history of gum disease, 60,995 of them with gingivitis and 3,384 with periodontitis. Periodontitis is a serious gum infection characterized by bleeding gums. Without timely treatment, periodontitis may destroy the jawbone.

For comparison, the researchers also looked at the medical records of 250,000 healthy patients with no record of gum disease. For the study, they factored in body mass index, smoking habits, and ethnicity.

Those with gum disease at the start of the study had a 37 percent higher risk of developing mental health problems over the next three years, the study found. The researchers observed these issues include higher rates of depression, anxiety, and “serious mental illness.”

The study found a 33 percent increase in the risk of developing autoimmune diseases like arthritis, type 1 diabetes, and psoriasis (a skin disorder) among those with oral health issues – all on top of anxiety and depression.

Many studies have previously associated high blood pressure and gum disease. Severe infections from periodontitis have also been linked to complications of the heart and lungs among people who fail to get treatment.

The researchers also found an 18 percent increase in the risk for cardiovascular disease, including heart failure, stroke, and dementia. The odds of developing type 2 diabetes increased by 26 percent.

“Poor oral health is extremely common, both in the United Kingdom and globally,” says Dr. Joht Singh Chandan says in a University of Birmingham news release.

“When oral ill-health progresses, it can lead to a substantially reduced quality of life. However, until now, not much has been known about the association of poor oral health and many chronic diseases, particularly mental ill-health.”

“As periodontal diseases are very common, an increased risk of other chronic diseases may represent a substantial public health burden,” says Dr. Chandan, the study’s co-first author.

“An important implication of our findings is the need for effective communication between dental and other healthcare professionals to ensure patients obtain an effective treatment plan targeting both oral and wider health to improve their existing overall health and reduce the risk of future illness,” says Professor Krish Nirantharakumar, the study’s co-senior author.

Dr. Joseph D. Lim is the former Associate Dean of the College of Dentistry, University of the East; former Dean, College of Dentistry, National University; Past President and Honorary Fellow of the Asian Oral Implant Academy; Honorary Fellow of the Japan College of Oral Implantologists; and Honorary Life Member of the Thai Association of Dental Implantology. For questions on dental health, e-mail jdlim2008@gmail.com or text 0917-8591515.

Dr. Kenneth Lester Lim, BSMMG, DDM, MSc- OI, graduated Doctor of Dental Medicine, University of the Philippines College of Dentistry, Manila, 2011; Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management, De la Salle University, Manila, 2002; and Master of Science (MSc.) in Oral Implantology, Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany, 2019. He is an Associate professor; Fellow, International Congress of Oral Implantologists; Member, American Academy of Implant Dentistry and Philippine College of Oral Implantologists. For questions on dental health, e-mail limdentalcenter@gmail.com/