

By: Matt Holder, MD MBA
Executive Director (AADMD) www.aadmd.org
American Academy of Developmental Medicine & Dentistry
Hi Ed,

Here are some stats that might be of interest to you.....

1. 50% of dentists will graduate from dental school without ever having seen a patient with DD. On average, a dental student will receive about 5 hours throughout four years of training on "special needs" (which also includes geriatric dentistry. (wolffe and perlman, 2005)
2. Medicaid, on average, reimburses dentists about 15-30% of what would be expected from a cash-paying patient. Since average dental practice overhead is about 60-70%, dentists actually lose money treating medicaid patients. 70% of people with ID are on medicaid.
3. Because of the poor training dentists have and the poor reimbursement rate they get, access is very low. Oral health is always among the top unmet healthcare needs in this population.
4. In a survey of institutional dentists (including florida), 70% were not taking dental x-rays and 80% were not doing periodontal charting of there patients. The standard of care in any dental office consists of 1) intraoral examination, 2) x-ray, 3) periodontal charting (Hood, 2002). The take home message from this study is that, even when access problems and medicaid problems are solved, the quality of care being delivered is still low. We think that the void is in the training process.
5. Given this poor state of care, its no wonder that the top dentists in the field of developmental dentistry estimate the periodontal disease rate to be approximately 65-85% in the ID population (compare to about 13% in the general population). 90-95% in the down syndrome population
6. Periodontal disease is correlated with higher rates of stroke, heart attack, pre-term birth, poor blood sugar control, malnutrition, obesity, peptic ulcer disease, bacterial endocarditis, and a number of other disease states. It is estimated that reducing the periodontal disease rates in the ID population will decrease the medical costs of dental neglect by about \$580 per person per year. (Holder, 2005)
7. Roughly 25% of people with ID will be referred to the operating room to receive routine dental care. (Dwyer, 1999). The average cost of OR dentistry is about \$2000-2500.
8. The Underwood and Lee Clinic in Louisville, KY, the only patient care,

teaching and research program focused exclusively on developmental dentistry in the nation has a referral rate to the OR of about 1%. The average cost of treating patients at the Underwood and Lee clinic is \$281 per person, per year, (unpublished data, Hood and Holder, 2006). The clinic nearly pays for itself in the cost savings associated with this lower OR referral rate (not including any other cost saving factors such as decreased periodontal disease, decreased psychiatric meds, decreased behavior management needs, and decreased ER utilization.

9. It is estimated that routine dental care in the ID population can save around \$264 per person per year in avoided dental treatment the following year. (Glassman, 2004)

10. Anecdotally, at the Underwood and Lee clinic we have seen patients with as many as 17 dental abscesses in their mouth. The are extraordinarily painful and are frequently the cause of behavior problems that go improperly treated with psychiatric medications for years (when what they really need is a dental visit). We've seen patient who, after receiving treatment, no longer required any behavioral interventions, were able to discontinue psychiatric medications, and did not use emergency psychiatric services. There was a highly publicized case, this year of a boy who died from a brain infection which occurred secondary to untreated dental abscesses. We've heard of other similar stories in the ID population.

Ed, I hope this helps. I'm in the Albuquerque airport at the moment, and that's all I could think of off the top of my head. If I think of anything else, I'll send it to you. Please extend an invitation to Jane for us to visit the Underwood and Lee Clinic, if she'd like to see it first hand.

Good Luck!
Matt Holder