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Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 4:45 PM
To: jparnell@oralhealthkansas.org
Subject: Oral Health Kansas Weekly Wednesday Update



Volume 2, Issue 9

February 16, 2011

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Through with Chew Week

February 20 through February 26 is "Through With Chew Week." The goal of the week is to raise awareness about the dangers of smokeless tobacco and encourage smokeless tobacco users

Legislative Update

Adult Dental Services in Medicaid

Throughout the month of February, the House and Senate budget committees are holding hearings on the FY 2012 budget. Oral Health Kansas is providing testimony to the committees reviewing the budgets for the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Department on Aging, and Health Policy Authority. At each hearing we are testifying about the need to implement an adult dental benefit in the Kansas Medicaid program. The Medicaid program includes dental services for children, but not for adults. Oral Health Kansas believes people should not be allowed to age out of dental services.

We recognize the budget crisis the state is in at this point means it will be very difficult for the Legislature to find any new money for adult dental services, but we believe in the long-term the services will more than pay for themselves in Medicaid savings. We are asking the budget committees to study the issue in more depth. So far this message is being received well.

If you are able to attend an "eggs and issues" event with your legislators at home, be sure to talk to them about the importance of ensuring all people who are

to quit.

The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that the use of smokeless tobacco is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco is addictive and can cause high blood pressure, throat cancer, mouth cancer, gum disease, tooth decay and gum recession.

Dentists and hygienists are encouraged to ask patients about tobacco use, advise patients to quit and refer them to the Kansas Tobacco Quitline 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free help quitting.

When Kansans are ready to be "Through With Chew" or other tobacco products, the toll-free Kansas Tobacco Quitline 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) is there to help. Experienced quit coaches work with callers to prepare for a quit date and help them make a free personalized quit plan. All calls are confidential. The Quitline also offers Web Coach,® a supplemental online tool. Web Coach® is designed to complement and enhance the phone-based counseling sessions with interactive features and social forums. There is also a national online smokeless tobacco cessation program, www.MyLastDip.com, designed for smokeless

eligible for Medicaid have access to dental services. The Oral Health Kansas office can provide talking points for anyone who is interested.

New Dental Bills Introduced

This year is proving to be an exciting year for dental services at the Kansas Legislature. A host of bills has been introduced this year to address a variety of types of access to dental services. Perhaps the centerpieces are bills to create an ECP III and a Registered Dental Professional. Both bills were introduced last week and are up for hearings this week.

The ECP III model was developed by the Kansas Dental Association in cooperation with the Kansas Dental Hygienists Association. The bill would create a new type of Extended Care Permit for dental hygienists, allowing them to perform additional services, including providing temporary fillings for decay.

The Registered Dental Professional model was developed by a coalition of Kansas Action for Children, Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved, and Kansas Health Consumer Coalition. This is a mid-level dental professional model. People who seek to become Registered Dental Professionals must first be Registered Dental Hygienists.

The Oral Health Kansas Board recognizes the need to expand and strengthen the dental workforce in Kansas and supports the efforts being undertaken to address this issue through SB 132 (ECP III) and HB 2280/SB 192 (Registered Dental Professional). Oral Health Kansas is dedicated to collaboration; as such, our organization is encouraging the parties working on dental workforce models to collaborate on a model that works best to meet the oral health needs of all Kansans.

Effects of Smokeless Tobacco

Gruen Von Behrens says, "Spit tobacco has ruined my life. Every time I turn around, they are putting me in the hospital either to have surgery or some

tobacco users between the ages of 14 and 25.

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kind of treatment. If I had known then what I know now, I never would have put a dip in my mouth. Spit tobacco seemed harmless, but in reality it was more than I could handle."

Gruen Von Behrens is a 27-year-old oral cancer survivor who has endured almost 30 painful and disfiguring surgeries to save his life, including one radical surgery that removed half his neck muscles, lymph nodes and 1/3 of his tongue.

During a camping trip with some friends when he was 13, Gruen, like many teens wanted to be cool, and fit in so it was there that he took his first dip of spit tobacco. What resulted was an addiction that affected and changed his life tremendously and in ways he never imagined. It was at age 17 that Gruen was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, a common form of oral cancer.

The tobacco industry markets spit tobacco and other smokeless tobacco products as a "safer" alternative to smoking cigarettes.

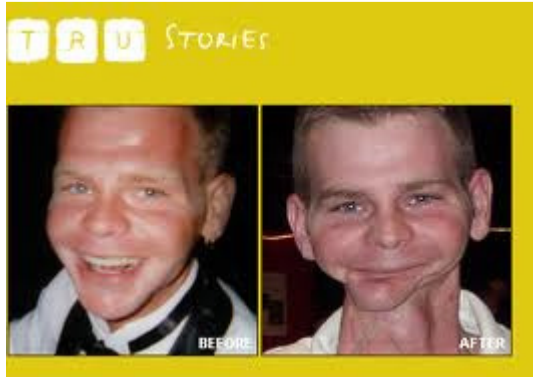
Gruen now travels on behalf of Oral Health America's National Spit Tobacco Education Program (NSTEP) and shares with the public the real life consequences of his own spit tobacco use. He is especially effective with young audiences, warning them to stay away from the spit tobacco that he believes caused his cancer.

For more information on the harmful effects of smokeless tobacco and Gruens story click on the following links:


www.cancer.org


www.healthunit.org

www.kidshealth.org



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