

Results in Review

Newsletter for referring dental professionals

Spring 2008

Removing Barriers: Caring for Seniors with Special Needs or Dementia.

Have you ever been asked by a patient's family if it makes sense to invest in the teeth of a person in their 70's, 80's or 90's? If so, how did you respond?

The best service we as dental professionals can provide to our patients is education. Sometimes this includes making patients aware of the full spectrum of treatment options that are available to them, even if we have to look outside our own office, or beyond our own perspective.

Very often, we perceive the circumstances of an older adult to be a challenge. At The Blende Dental Group, we routinely help patients to overcome perceived barriers to care, including:

- Cost of treatment (including questions about Medicare, Medicaid and Dental)
- Travel / Transportation
- Accommodation of special need or disability
- Health status for the medically complex
- Priority of dental care in relation to other health issues

Though our dentists spend the majority of their time in hospital Operating Rooms or in our I.V. Suite, we do make time to take patient care "back to basics." If a patient in proximity to our San Francisco office cannot come in for a consult, we go to their home. If the patient is not in our immediate geographic area, we partner with a local dentist or periodontist who can gather the preliminary information about the patient's condition, send us duplicate x-rays, photographs & perio charting, and confer with us to develop a treatment plan where we work in concert to achieve predictable results. Then we assist the patient with transportation directly to the hospital for treatment.

Oral Health Concerns for Seniors

- Dental Decay, Root Caries, Periodontal Disease
- Moderate To Severe Pain
- Life-Threatening Infections
- Increased Risk For Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes And Osteoporosis
- Increased Risk For Respiratory Disease, Especially Pneumonia
- Loose Teeth That Could Be Aspirated
- Xerostomia
- Oral Cancer
- Poorly Fitting Dentures
- Malnutrition
- Altered Communication
- Diminished Quality Of Life, Including Poor Self-Image & Self-Esteem, Depression
- Expensive Emergency Dental Care & Restorative Care

Who We Are:

The Blende Dental Group is a private practice dedicated to serving the phobic, disabled and medically compromised communities by providing definitive full-mouth rehabilitation under general anesthesia and I.V. sedation.

What Can We Do for You?

When you've decided that a patient is no longer a candidate for treatment in your practice, due to health risk, emotional difficulty or non-compliance, the Blende Dental Group welcomes your referral. To find out more about partnering with our office, please visit www.DrBlende.com.

Case Study: Dental treatment and dementia



Seniors are especially predisposed to aggressive periodontal disease and rampant tooth decay, often as a result of their medical conditions or prescribed medications. Oral health problems that go unchecked can result not only in pain and costly future treatments, but also overall medical health can be affected. They are at risk for serious infections that could lead to an expensive hospital stay or even death.

Their quality of life is also at stake. Most people want to keep their own teeth as long as possible. Unfortunately, many seniors with severe medical conditions, dementia or other disabilities are offered only tooth removal and dentures, rather than the more functional and cosmetically appealing dental solutions made available to the general public.

Dental treatment is difficult for seniors with dementia.

As dementia progresses, the person may no longer be able to maintain their own oral health, understand that their oral health is important, express symptoms of oral health problems or pain, or give informed consent for treatment. Most are unable to tolerate or comply with removable prostheses.

Some seniors with dementia may have no trouble cooperating with dental treatment, especially if they have received regular dental care throughout their life. For others, dental treatment may be frightening or confusing, as the senior struggles with an unfamiliar environment, strange faces and disruption from their routine. These seniors may benefit from a home visit consultation and treatment under general anesthesia.

Franklin* is an 84 year old patient whose circumstances include several of the "perceived barriers to care" identified on the opposite page. In addition to his Alzheimer's type dementia, which was the primary reason that his daughter was unable to locate dental care for her father, Franklin also has a complicated medical history that includes coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes type II, and anemia of platelets, WBCs and RBCs.

To minimize Franklin's travel from Sacramento to San Francisco, we coordinated all of his care in advance. We provided a treatment plan estimate based on the x-rays taken by a dental x-ray lab near his residential care center. We arranged finances with his daughter, and answered her questions about his insurance, Medicare with Kaiser Permanente secondary.

We coordinated his care with his physicians. As a result of all of our pre-planning, Franklin was able to go straight to the hospital for treatment.

We received a letter from Franklin's daughter after his treatment was completed. She said:

"My dad always provided for his family, and I felt that I needed to do the same for him in this stage of his life"

"Thanks again to you and your staff for the rapid and holistic approach to integrate his care with your office, Kaiser Permanente, [his] Alzheimer's Care Center and the imaging facility. You pulled all this together expertly in 11 days!"

*Patient's name has been changed at his family's request

The Treatment Plan:

- Surgery: General Anesthesia at Kaiser Permanente San Rafael
- 30,000 platelets, 2 packs of O type blood and 1 gram of Ancef administered by CRNA
- SC/RP: 4 quads
- Extractions: 2, 16, 17, 31, 32
- Crowns: 6, 7, 12, 13, 29
- Composites: 21, 25
- Seat Appointment In-Office

Clinical Interdisciplinary Team

- Dr. David Blende (prosthetics)
- Dr. Samer Itani (prosthetics)
- Dr. Len Tolstunov (oral surgery)