

American Heart Association

With the growing concern over the relationship between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, dental professionals must familiarize themselves with all aspects of heart health as well as dental health. The American Heart Association (AHA) maintains a website at <http://www.americanheart.org>

The AHA is a national voluntary health agency whose current mission as stated on the website 'is to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke'. This website is a wealth of information concerning various heart topics. It is available in both English and Spanish versions.

The home page is designed to attract both the lay person and the healthcare professional. It displays current and interesting topics in the centre of the page as well as navigation bars at both the top and sides of the page, to allow the viewer to select from a variety of sections on heart health. A search window is available to insert topics for the viewer to investigate. This site also provides a search window for the viewer to type in his/her zip code and locate any heart-related events in the local area.

The lower portion of the home page has sections on *What's New, Programs and Tools*, as well as links to sections for *Health-care Providers, Scientist and Researchers and Patients and Families*. The viewer also has the ability to log in and obtain a personal and confidential heart health profile on the website within 20 min.

The main sections of the website are divided into the following categories: *Warning Signs, American Stroke Association, Diseases and Conditions, Children's Health, CPR and ECC, En espanol, Healthy Lifestyle, Advocacy: You're the Cure, Fund Raising, Publication and Resources, Heart and Stroke Encyclopedia, News, About Us, Science and Professional, and Local Info*. The sections of most interest to the dental professional would be the sections on *Diseases and Conditions, Publications and Resources, News and Science and Professionals*.

The section on *Diseases and Conditions* includes the following topic areas: Arrhythmia, Cholesterol, Diabetes, Heart Attack,

Heart Failure, High Blood Pressure, Adults with Congenital Heart Disease, Peripheral Artery Disease, Other Conditions, and Treatment Options. Each of these topic sections include an overview as well as helpful hints and advice on the topic.

The section on *Publications and Resources* includes many valuable topics such as scientific publications, patient and consumer educational materials and a cookbook for heart health. Heart-related links and heart disease statistics are also included.

The *News* section provides links to the latest news articles on heart and stroke health as well as advocacy news and public service announcements. The section on *Science and Professionals* includes topic areas on membership in the organization, member services, conferences and events, continuing education, a library, information about research, patient information, quality initiatives, and AHA recommended guidelines for patient care.

This website is easy to navigate, although some of the sections are confusing as to whether they are meant for healthcare professionals or consumers. The information provided on the website can be helpful for the clinician to both guide treatment options as well as provide useful patient education materials. The allied dental educator will find the website helpful in educating students on the relationship of heart disease with respect to all aspects of health including dental health.

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