



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Using technology to improve oral health

Would not it be terrific if we could capitalize on the latest technology to improve the oral health of the public? We can do that now. I am pleased to announce that the IFDH has partnered with the Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU) to support a new messaging service called Text2Floss. This programme was created by Drs. Jack Dillenberg, Dean, and Tony Hashemian, Assistant Dean for Global Oral Health in partnership with CellTrust Corporation with the understanding that many individuals own a cell phone and send or receive text messages.

Texting is one means of communication in which oral health information can be delivered simply and conveniently. Text2Floss works by registering online or by phone. Using a cell phone, the patient can text the word 'Floss' to the number 878787. Once registered, they will receive text messages with tips on oral care. After a 7-day period of messages, the patient will be sent a coupon to purchase an oral health product. If patients no longer want to participate in the programme, they can simply text STOP to 878787. To resume the programme, they enroll again by sending 'Floss' to the same number.

Visiting text2floss.com revealed more key prevention messages than a friendly reminder to floss daily. The site provides educational information concerning saliva and the pH of the mouth, heart disease and oral health, stress, and diabetes. References are offered should the reader desire to learn more oral health information.

To date, ATSU has partnered with the ADHA, Reach®Floss and Listerine® Brand of Johnson & Johnson, Dentaquest Foundation, and Dentrrix. The programme has been showcased at major dental conferences and has been expanded to now be available through the Dentrrix system and as an app for Ipad, Ipad minis, and Iphone5s. It is also available on iTunes at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/text2floss/id797806327?mt=8>.

What makes this programme appealing is that research is being conducted relative to its effectiveness. A randomized clinical trial was performed to determine if this technology

improved oral health knowledge and behaviour in mothers of young children. One hundred and fifty-six mothers from a private practice and community clinic were recruited and randomly assigned to a control or TEXT group. Oral health behaviours and knowledge were assessed pre- and post-intervention. Mothers in the TEXT group received text messages for 7 days asking about flossing and providing oral health information. Findings of this study showed no difference in knowledge and behaviour between the control and TEXT group at baseline. However, post-intervention showed that the TEXT mothers flossed more, had increased knowledge, tried to improve their child's oral health behaviours, and decreased their child's soda and sugary snack use more than the mothers in the control group (1).

As preventive oral health specialists, we all know how difficult it is for our patients to brush and clean interdentally. Patients routinely tell us they lack the motivation, time or skill to invest in their oral health with a daily home biofilm management routine. Nevertheless, finding any resource that is encouraging and productive in improving oral health is a worthwhile venture. Text2Floss may be another avenue to explore in gaining acceptance and adherence to an improved oral health home regimen. Let's share this good news with our patients. For more information about Text2Floss, visit www.ifdh.org and text2floss.com.

JoAnn Gurenlian, RDH, PhD
President, IFDH
E-mail: jargphd@verizon.net

Reference

- 1 Hashemian T, Kritz-Silverstein D, Baker R. Text2Floss: A randomized clinical trial of an innovative option to improve oral health behavior. Abstract. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting 2013.

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