J Clin Periodontol 2007; 34: 459 doi: 10.1111/j.1600-051X.2007.01089.x

Journal of Clinical Periodontology

Letter to the Editor

Comprehensive dental therapy (periodontal and exodontia) removes inflammatory foci and aids in glycemic control

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Friedlander AH. Comprehensive dental therapy (periodontal and exodontia) removes inflammatory foci and aids in glycemic control. J Clin Periodontol 2007; 34: 459. doi:10.1111/j.1600-051X.2007.01089.x.

Dear Editor,

Jones et al. (2007b) are to be congratulated on their well thought out Veterans Affairs (VA) study on the effects of removing foci of chronic infection/inflammation from diabetics by providing periodontal treatment and gauging its effectiveness by measuring HbA_1c levels. The authors of this study suggest that their results were not as robust as those of a prior VA study, namely Stewart et al. (2001), because of ''selection bias'' in the latter study's control group. I, as a coauthor of the first VA study would posit that the difference in results between the two studies is that Stewart et al. (2001) provided not only periodontal treatment but also extracted teeth having either excessive alveolar bone loss or periapical infections both of which were likely causing a robust inflammatory reaction. I find it difficult to understand why Stewart's patients had numerous hopeless teeth, 75% of which were removed for severe periodontitis and 25% of which were removed because of periapical lesions secondary to dental caries, while Jones et al. (2007b) did not report the need to extract even a single tooth. This is somewhat puzzling given my familiarity with the dental health of the average veteran utilizing a system of care in which I have practiced oral surgery for almost 40 years.

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