



The Age One Dental Visit—Don't Leave Home Without It

I don't know how the reader of this editorial is feeling, but I have become weary of the constant emphasis by the press, which includes television, concentrating on negatives in our society, whether it is the "War on Terrorism", the War in Iraq, and yes, the recent November election. Recently, I had one of those "significant positive emotional events" that alleviated my perseveration on current affairs, and re-enforced how fortunate we are to be pediatric dentists.

The age one dental visit has become the foundation for pediatric dentistry and the AAPD. As a full-time clinician in private practice, I am finding it evermore difficult to deal with the "tidal wave" of Early Childhood Caries that is causing so much pain and suffering for children. I feel more than ever that it is virtually impossible to eliminate this problem through normal restorative and/or surgical means. Therefore, prevention is the only answer, by establishing a "dental home" at age one for all children!

This concept was reinforced dramatically when I was privileged to examine a wonderful 13-month old child, who has a serious cardiac ventricular septal defect. The child, who will be undergoing extensive cardiac surgery at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto in the near future, was referred to my pediatric practice by a cardiologist.

After completing a thorough oral exam by means of the "head-to-toe/knee-to-knee" technique utilizing the mother

and myself, I had time to discuss age related oral hygiene instruction, oral facial growth and development, appropriate fluoride therapy, and nutritional and dietary counseling with the parents. The parents in turn asked many outstanding and challenging questions. Yes, there were a few tears from the child when she was being examined which is perfectly normal for a 1-year old. The parents stated how pleased they were that "a dentist would see their child so young, and how relieved they were to have their concerns addressed."

This "significant emotional event" as stated previously, emphasizes the uniqueness of our specialty, and how honored we are to be involved with this wonderful segment of the population.

All of us need to become "evangelists" in order to convince other professionals, whether members of the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, family physicians, and even some of our pediatric dental confreres, to establish a dental home for all children at age one, and yes, "don't leave home without it"!

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