

Preface

Adolescent Oral Health



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Guest Editors

Adolescence is the transitional period between puberty and maturity and is often characterized using terms such as *tumultuous* and *turbulent*. Although there is no standard definition of adolescence, this complex intersection of accelerated physical growth and dynamic hormonal change is accompanied by intensified self-awareness and the conflicting forces of acculturation to the demands of society.

The adolescent patient has distinct dental needs as described throughout the various articles contained within this issue of the *Dental Clinics of North America*. Despite the fact that adolescents are identified within the professional spectrum of the specialty of pediatric dentistry, the vast majority of adolescents seek and receive dental care from general practitioners. Thus, the intent of this issue is to provide practicing dental professionals with evidence-based, clinically relevant information that will enhance awareness of adolescent oral health issues and improve the delivery of care to adolescent dental patients.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry is engaged in a 5-year adolescent oral health project called *Awesome Smiles*. This project has identified four goals that may be summarized as follows: promoting awareness about adolescent oral health; integrating adolescent oral health into other health professions; reducing adolescent oral health and dental care disparities; and collaborating with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau Office of Adolescent Health to promote its missions.

It is our sincere desire that the information contained in this issue will enhance awareness of adolescent oral health issues among all dentists who

treat adolescent patients and will serve as a resource for other professionals who provide health care to this segment of our population. The ultimate goal is to improve the general and oral health and well-being of our adolescent patients.

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