

Treating the whole body

Total Health: Beyond the Mouth program from Henry Schein helps dentists keep patients healthy from head to toe

**By Fred Michmershuizen
Dental Tribune**

■ It's no secret that good oral health is vital to a person's overall health. Now, thanks to a program being introduced by Henry Schein, dentists have new tools to help educate their patients not only on periodontal disease and oral cancer, but also sleep disorders, heart disease, diabetes and other serious conditions.

"Our goal is to help practitioners educate their patients on the seriousness of oral health and how it affects the rest of the body," said John Chatham of Henry Schein Dental during an interview Monday after-



• John Chatham, left, and Jen McGuire of Henry Schein Dental (booth No. 1217) have been busy here at GNYDM telling meeting attendees about the new Total Health: Beyond the Mouth program. (Photo/Fred Michmershuizen, Dental Tribune)

noon at the Greater New York Dental Meeting.

Jen McGuire of Henry Schein Dental said that Total Health: Beyond the Mouth, developed by Henry Schein in conjunction with the American Academy for Oral Systemic Health, offers dentists a number of tools that they can use to educate their patients and improve their overall health.

It all starts when a patient is asked to complete a checklist, which assists the dentist in assessing oral health and its impact on overall health. Patients are asked to indicate whether their gums bleed or are sore or swollen, whether they have difficulty chewing or swallowing, if they snore, and if there is a family history of heart disease or diabetes.

The patient is also given a brochure stating that when gums become infected and inflamed from periodontal disease, bacteria in plaque can spread and grow below the gum line. The bacteria can then enter into the blood stream and travel to major organs and begin new infections.

Ongoing research suggests that periodontal disease may be linked to heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes, the brochure states.

"Periodontal disease is inflammation, and if you have inflammation anywhere in your body, it is not a good thing," Chatham said.

After the patient has received the information, the dental professional can then use the checklist in evaluating the patient, and when necessary further information can be provided.

Additional resources for patients with sleep apnea are available through the Henry Schein Sleep Complete dental sleep medicine program.

Chatham said that since most people see their dentist more often than their physician, it makes sense for dentists to speak to patients about their overall health. The main objective of the Total Health: Beyond the Mouth program, he said, is to help elevate dentists in the minds of their patients.

"After all," he said, "If dentists do better, we as a company do better."

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