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Dental public health is a unique and challenging American Dental Association-recognized specialty because the patient is the entire community or population, such as a school, neighborhood, city, state, or the nation, with a focus on vulnerable populations. Limited resources are maximized through prevention, policies, programs, and organized community efforts to respond to great unmet needs. Although dental public health professionals are few in number, millions of people every day have better oral health because of these professionals, who work on the local, state, and national level.

Financing Dental Care: Trends in Public and Private Expenditures for Dental Services	281
Howard Bailit and Tryfon Beazoglou	

This article examines the financing of dental care in the United States. The major issues addressed include the amount and sources of funds, the reasons for increased dental care expenditures, the comparison of dental care with other medical care expenditures, the policy implications of current trends, and some cautious predictions about the financing of dental care in the next 10 to 20 years. The supply of dental services is expected to increase substantially in the next 10 to 20 years with more dental school graduates, a new midlevel practitioner, and greater use of allied dental health personnel. Whether the supply of services will grow faster than the demand for care is unknown.

Oral Health Disparities in the United States

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Amit Chattopadhyay

Oral health disparities refers to the existence of differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of oral diseases and other adverse health conditions, as well as the use of health care services, among specific population groups in the United States. Existence of disparities in oral health status, accessing and using the oral health care delivery system, and receiving treatment depending on gender, race or ethnicity, education, income, disability, geographic location, and sexual orientation have been documented. Different states have initiated a series of steps as tools to document, assess, develop strategies, and monitor progress in efforts to eliminate or reduce oral health disparities in the United States.

Multicultural Issues in Oral Health

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Raul I. Garcia, Cynthia A. Cadoret, and Michelle Henshaw

Demographic changes over the coming decades will heighten the challenges to both the dental profession and the nation. The expected growth in the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities and the concomitant growth of immigrant populations are likely to lead to worsening of oral health disparities. Their consequences are becoming increasingly evident, as the profession strives to improve the oral health of all Americans. The increasing diversity of the population, together with the importance of cultural beliefs and behaviors that affect health outcomes, will require ways to enhance provider-patient communications and oral health literacy. One important means by which to promote oral health in diverse populations is to develop a dental workforce that is both culturally and linguistically competent, as well as one that is as culturally diverse as the American population.

Oral Health Literacy: The New Imperative to Better Oral Health

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Alice M. Horowitz and Dushanka V. Kleinman

Effective communication with patients is the cornerstone of quality dental care and oral health outcomes. Oral health literacy skills are critical to empowering individuals' ability to improve their oral health. A large part of the American public has low health literacy skills. Low health literacy contributes to disease and is costly. Being able to understand health information and how to obtain services is critical to oral health management. The communication skills of the dental team are pivotal to increasing oral health literacy skills of Americans.

Patient- and Population-Reported Outcomes in Public Health Dentistry: Oral Health-Related Quality of Life

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R. Gary Rozier and Bhavna T. Pahel

At present no process is in place in the United States to comprehensively monitor the national burden of oral diseases

from the perspective of oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL), yet available evidence shows that a substantial percentage of the adult population rates their oral health poorly. This article reviews applications of OHRQoL in dental public health. The authors specifically review its use, contributions, and needed advances in: (1) monitoring the impacts of oral diseases on OHRQoL at the national level, and in public health surveillance at the state and local levels; (2) treatment outcomes research and program evaluation; and (3) clinical practice.

Understanding Measurement of Dental Diseases and Research Participation in Practice Set-Up

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Amit Chattopadhyay, Oscar Arevalo, and Woosung Sohn

A general understanding of the measurement of dental diseases can help practitioners in the process of assessing the patient's future risk of disease. More importantly, as clinical studies shift from the traditional academic setting to practice-based networks, practitioners might play a more significant role in research. An important issue in oral health disease management in the future will be the standardization of clinical criteria and the development of alternative mechanisms of data collection for epidemiologic purposes.

Fluorides in Dental Public Health Programs

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Jayanth V. Kumar and Mark E. Moss

The use of fluorides in dental public health programs has a long history. With the availability of fluoridation and other forms of fluorides, dental caries have declined dramatically in the United States. This article reviews some of the ways fluorides are used in public health programs and discusses issues related to their effectiveness, cost, and policy.

Planning and Evaluating Community Oral Health Programs

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Scott L. Tomar

Community oral-health programs focus primarily on populations, including those who do not seek oral health care. Planning these programs should include involvement of the community, broadly defined to include individuals and organizations that represent those who can help design and implement it and those who could be affected by it. This article provides an overview of systematic approaches to planning and evaluating community oral health programs. Such approaches help ensure that stakeholders agree on the purpose of the program, work toward its success, and contribute toward its continuous improvement.

Public Health Issues in Geriatric Dentistry in the United States

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J.M. Chalmers and R.L. Ettinger

The aging United States population living in the new millennium has dental needs that are very different and more complex than

those experienced by previous older adult cohorts during the twentieth century. The type of dental care to be provided for older Americans goes way beyond emergency care, extractions and denture care. Dental caries is still clearly a public health problem for subgroups of older Americans, such as those of lower socioeconomic status, with dementia, who are homebound and who are institutionalized. These are also the subgroups experiencing greater barriers to accessing dental care. Stakeholders, including dental professionals and the dental benefits industry, need to work together to develop innovative dental financing programs that will increase older Americans access to dental care.

Improving and Maintaining Oral Health for People with Special Needs

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Paul Glassman and Paul Subar

The number of people in the United States population with disabilities and other special needs is growing dramatically. These individuals present unique challenges for oral health professionals in planning and carrying out dental treatment and for the oral health delivery system. Because it has been recognized that the current delivery system is not working well for these populations, new workforce, financing, and delivery models are beginning to emerge that may hold promise for creating and maintaining oral health for currently underserved populations, including people with disabilities and other special needs. This article discusses the implications of this for the oral health profession, describes the challenges of providing oral health services for this population, and discusses the implications of these challenges for the organization of the oral health delivery system.

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