

Focus On Oral Health



A newsletter for North Dakota's oral health community

Spring 2012

Nursing home program off to a great start

Bridging the Dental Gap (BDG), a safety-net dental clinic located in Bismarck, began providing dental services at nursing homes in September 2011. Using funds from a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant, the clinic was able to purchase portable equipment and has been sending dental professionals into local nursing homes to care for patients.

According to Marcia Olson, BDG executive director, the program is off to a great start. "Since we started, we have provided services to more than 290 patients at more than 400 appointments," said Olson. "We've worked with patients at Medcenter One St. Vincent's Care Center and Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center – two days a month at each location. We recently lost a dentist who went into private practice, but when we get our staff numbers back up, we would like to expand the program into other area nursing homes."

The team of dental professionals, which includes a dentist, a hygienist and an assistant, make the trip to the long term care facilities. One challenge is transporting all the equipment that's needed. BDG has tapped into the services of their neighbor, Nightlife Limousine Service. The service works with them

and uses a van to transport the equipment, and also helps to set it up. The equipment includes two dental chairs, two mobile compressors, two full dental units, two moveable cabinets with instruments and supplies, portable lights and chairs for the staff members, a portable statum (autoclave) and ultrasonic cleaner, a portable x-ray unit and sensors with a computer with digital x-ray capability and a cavitron for cleanings.

The dental team has performed exams, x-rays, cleanings, filling and extractions, along with denture adjustments, repairs and relines. Some patients have even been able to receive new dentures.

"There is a major need among the elderly for a program that goes to them," said Olson. "The nursing home program really needs to expand and there needs to be more of them in the state. Transportation challenges, patient disabilities and an aging population with untreated oral health issues are all reasons that these programs are needed. If multiple programs were put into

operation, it would go a long way towards helping our nursing home and care center citizens meet their oral health needs. Our program in Bismarck is off to a great start and is helping many people. Hopefully the funding can be found to increase these services across the state."



Oral Health Program working on DentaQuest grant

The North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program has been awarded a grant from the DentaQuest Foundation to participate in its Oral Health 2014 Initiative. The grant will be used to create a strategic plan for oral (dental) health in North Dakota. A task force of 30 diverse stakeholders has met several times since the grant project began. They began the planning process by listening to several presentations, including those about oral health needs of American Indians, Medicaid, the dental workforce, medical and dental collaboration, a policymaker's view on oral health needs, children's oral health needs, North Dakota Community Health Centers and emergency room dental procedures.

The task force continued the process by completing an inventory of the oral health strengths in North Dakota, and also discussed trends and the goals of oral health in our state. Six community forums were held across the state with approximately 100 participants to assess perceptions of oral health needs among community members. Additional needs assessment surveys and discussions are being conducted with rural North Dakota residents, tribal leaders, and medical and dental entities.

The task force has now begun to work on a strategic plan that will address the policy and environmental changes necessary to improve access to oral health care in North Dakota. The plan will examine strengths and weaknesses in the delivery system and provide a vision for improving oral health care to the underserved and vulnerable populations across the life span.

The plan also will address the enhancement of prevention, public health infrastructure and medical/dental collaborations.

Innovative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary models for oral health service delivery in a rural environment will be created.



Dr. Bill Maas, former CDC Chief Dental Officer, presented information to the DentaQuest Task Force about dental access models.

Coalition News



North Dakota Oral Health Coalition updates:

BSS for Older Adults – As highlighted in a previous oral health newsletter, the Basic Screening Survey (BSS) for older adults is being performed this summer in skilled long term care facilities across the state. On April 20, Public Health Hygienists from the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program met to be trained on the screening criteria and methodology specific to the North Dakota screening survey.

Oral Health Coalition officers – The Oral Health Coalition has voted in a new slate of officers, including Marcia Olson, President; Carla Kelly, Vice President; Dave Zentner, Secretary; and Sue Mattson, Treasurer. Members-at-large on the board are Tony Richards, Joe Cichy and Linda Rorman.

The next meeting of the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition will be held Sept. 7 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Gold Seal Building in Bismarck. If you are interested in joining the coalition, please contact Ashley Kopp at 701.328.2356 or akopp@nd.gov.

North Dakota Regional Public Health Hygienists

Jamie Blumhagen, R.D.H.

Hollie Harrington, R.D.H., B.S.

Marlene Hulm, R.D.H.

Helen Rosencrans, R.D.H.

For assistance with oral health needs in your school or community, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program at 701.328.2356 or akopp@nd.gov.

Ronald McDonald Care Mobile delivering dental care to underserved children

One of the greatest unmet needs of low-income families is the need for dental care. Children's untreated dental problems can result in pain and infection, create difficulty chewing and eating, and interfere with concentration and learning.

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (RMCM) arrived in Bismarck on January 4, 2012, and is a new program that will bring dental care to children in need. The Care Mobile will focus on the oral health needs of underserved children in the western half of North Dakota.

The RMCM is a 40-foot, state-of-the-art mobile dental clinic owned and operated by Ronald McDonald House Charities of Bismarck. The Care Mobile has two dental operatories, a sterilization center and a reception area. The clinic will provide basic dental services including exams, x-rays, oral health education, cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, fillings, pulpotomies, simple extractions and referrals as needed. The RMCM will use digital x-rays and electronic dental records. Bridging the Dental Gap, Inc., is the clinical service provider and they will oversee the dental staff and manage the delivery of the dental services. Dental staff includes licensed and certified dental professionals – a dentist, dental hygienist and dental assistant.

The RMCM began operation the first week of February. The Care Mobile will initially be targeting services and coordinating with schools with greater than 50 percent of their children on the free- and reduced-fee school lunch program, Head Start Programs, reservation areas and community health centers without dental clinics. Children who do not have a regular dentist and have not seen a dentist within the past two years will be eligible for services. During the summer months, the RMCM can be booked in communities with oral health needs.



The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile is made possible through the generous contributions and support of major partners/sponsors including Ronald McDonald House Charities, Inc., Oakbrook, Ill.; Ronald McDonald House Charities – Bismarck;

the State of North Dakota; Health Resources and Services Administration; Tom and Francis Leach Foundation, Inc.; Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, KEM

Electric Cooperative, Inc., Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc., Roughrider Electric Cooperative; Otto Bremer Foundation; North Dakota McDonald's Owners and Operators and MDU Resources Foundation.

For more information on the RMCM or to schedule a week at your school or in your community, contact Kathy Keiser, Ronald McDonald Charities Executive Director, or Celeste Espeseth, Program Manager at rmcm@btinet.net or call 701.258.8551.



A dental hygienist provides preventive services to a child in the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile.

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Resources Available

Check out a great new website – www.ilikemyteeth.org – about oral health that provides information on three main areas: access, fluoridation and education. You can view fact sheets, information and sign up for a free electronic newsletter.



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