

## Treating Gum Disease Lowers Medical Costs for Diabetes Patients

A new report suggests that treating gum disease in patients who have diabetes with procedures such as cleanings and periodontal scaling is linked to 10 to 12 percent lower medical costs per month.

The findings are encouraging but the study was not designed to firmly establish cause and effect, said George Taylor, University of Michigan associate professor of dentistry, who also has an appointment in epidemiology in the U-M School of Public Health. Taylor led the research project to investigate whether routine, non-surgical treatment for gum disease is linked to lower medical care costs for people with diabetes.

In periodontal disease, the body reacts to the bacteria causing the gum infection by producing proteins or chemicals called inflammatory mediators. Ulcers and open sores in the gums become passageways for these proteins and for the bacteria themselves to enter the body's blood circulation. These inflammatory mediators, as well as some parts of the bacteria, prevent the body from effectively removing glucose, or sugar, from the blood.

The higher level of blood sugar is known as poor diabetes control. Poor diabetes control leads to serious diabetes complications such as vision disorders, cardiovascular and kidney dis-

ease and amputations, among others.

"Cleanings and other non-surgical periodontal treatment remove the harmful bacteria," Taylor said. "We believe this

*Ulcers and sores in the gums become passageways for proteins and for the bacteria themselves to enter the body's blood circulation.*

helps prevent the body from producing those harmful chemicals that can enter the systemic circulation and contribute to poorer diabetes control."

Blue Care Network provided U-M researchers data from 2,674 patients aged 18-64 who were enrolled in BCN between 2001 and 2005 and had at least 12 consecutive months of medical, dental, and pharmaceutical coverage.

"We found insured adults with diabetes in Michigan who received routine periodontal treatment, such as dental cleanings and scaling, have significantly lower medical care costs than those who do not," Taylor

said. "These results could be meaningful to individuals, employers, health care providers and insurers."

The study showed that medical care costs decreased by an average of 11 percent per month for patients who received one or two periodontal treatment procedures annually compared to those who received none. For patients receiving three or four annual treatments, costs decreased nearly 12 percent.

The study also showed that combined medical and pharmaceutical monthly costs were 10 percent lower for patients who received one or two periodontal procedures annually.

"The results of our analyses provide additional evidence supporting a beneficial role for periodontal treatment in improving overall health for people with diabetes," Taylor said. The findings could fuel changes in policies and practices for diabetes patients and their insurers.

The research was supported by a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation. Taylor's team includes: Wenche Borgnakke, senior research associate in health sciences; Michael Manz, senior research associate in health sciences, and Tammie Nahra, assistant research scientist.

Source: University of Michigan.

## SPARKS Reception to Feature Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

By Simcha Eichenstein

SPARKS, an organization founded by Mrs. Esther Kenigsberg, has a mission — to provide comprehensive, integrated services to meet the educational, psycho-social and psychiatric needs of women with pre- and post-natal depression. This important organization will celebrate the expansion of its services to the greater community with a reception on Sunday, January 18, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m., at its new offices in the Synergy First Building, located at 1575 East 19 Street, Brooklyn.

SPARKS offers services customized to the specific needs of the family unit, with sensitivity to each individual's unique experience of pre- and post-natal depression, and with respect for socio-economic, cultural, racial and gender issues.

Since SPARKS' inception several years ago, the organization has revolutionized the attitude of the community toward the very real problem of post-partum depression, as well as on how to effectively detect and treat this condition.

Supported by a broad spectrum of the community,

SPARKS has earned the admiration of governmental officials such as Assemblyman Dov Hikind and others, who have pledged their utmost support for SPARKS, and for its track record of commitment to the happiness and health of a woman and her child.

The upcoming reception, sponsored by Synergy First Medical, will allow the communal leadership to learn more about SPARKS and its plans for serving the community. Noted Professor and orator Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski will, *iy"H*, be the keynote speaker.

SynergyFirst Medical is a state-of-the-art facility that offers a multi-disciplinary practice, including general surgery, vascular surgery, podiatric surgery, interventional pain surgery, cardiology, and podiatric surgery, among others.

To make a reservation for the reception, please contact The Friedlander Group, event coordinators, at (718) 436-5555, ext. 201, or via email at SPARKS@FriedlanderGroupPR.com.

For more information about the various services provided by SPARKS, please call (718)-2-SPARKS (718-277-2757).

## Down Economy Causing Sleepless Nights

Continued from page A1

increase, according to sleep medicine experts. For starters, those at Stanford and the University of California San Francisco report waiting lists of up to two months. While that's not entirely unusual, they are hearing complaints from existing patients that the economic crisis is an additional stressor and is exacerbating their current sleep problems or causing their insomnia to resurface.

Most patients have an inability to fall asleep or stay asleep, says Christine Won, associate director of the Sleep Disorders Center at UCSF Medical Center. "They complain about a lot of anxiety, mind-racing and an inability to relax and unwind," Won says. "I can only assume that the more our economy is in turmoil, the bigger toll it will take on our sleep." People's ability to triumph over their recession-induced insomnia depends on how effective their coping mechanisms are and how much control they have over their finances, she adds.

Ironically, research has yet to prove why we need sleep. Some studies suggest a purging of chemicals; that the body somehow resets itself overnight in slumber mode, Won explains.

But we know that a lack of sleep results in a lower immunity, cognition and emotional health. And fragmented sleep has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. Prolonged insomnia can also lead to or increase chances of anxiety, depression and other mood disorders.

Here's a dose of reality: "When you look at rats that are sleep-deprived, they get ulcers, their hair falls out and they die sooner," Won says.

Point made. When a patient comes to see Won, the physician first rules out underlying diseases that may contribute to sleep problems. After that, if she determines that the issue is due to acute stress, Won starts the patient on a regimen of good sleep hygiene, which can include everything from avoiding caffeine to hitting the sheets at the same time every night.

She also tries to undo poor sleeping habits. For instance, fragmented sleepers should not look at the clock every time they wake up because, over time, they may be training their bodies to wake up. Also, Won condones relaxation exercises, imagery, biofeedback and breathing techniques — an hour before bedtime. All of these lifestyle changes can take up to six weeks to prove effective, but they work for

about 70 percent of patients, Won says.

Those who don't experience relief typically spend a night at the clinic, where their sleep is monitored for evidence of disorders such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome. If none is present, Won diagnoses the person with psychophysiological insomnia and prescribes hypnotics, or sleeping pills. A small number of chronic insomniacs require sleep deprivation therapy, or, what Won calls "boot camp for insomniacs."

"We write out a program restricting their sleep for weeks so they essentially fall asleep from exhaustion," she says. "It works, but it's not pleasant."

At the Stanford Sleep Clinic in Palo Alto, postdoctoral psychology fellow Allison T. Siebern educates patients about normal sleep and methods of relaxation. Like UCSF, Stanford has seen a rise in sleep concerns among existing patients, Siebern says.

She works in the behavioral sleep medicine division of the psychology department and performs assessments on patients. Usually, the first step is to create a buffer time before bed to do calming or relaxing activities, such as reading or crafts. For other patients, the challenge is teaching them to limit the time that they're

awake in bed. Take note: Do not pay bills in bed or get under the covers with your laptop.

Siebern also teaches patients muscle scans and progressive muscle relaxation and imagery to help them relax. When necessary, she uses timed light exposure, which resets a person's sleep-wake body clock. The biggest mistake people

make when it comes to sleep? Putting pressure on themselves, Siebern says.

"When it doesn't happen they become frustrated and it becomes a cycle," she explains. "Sleep is a process that cannot be forced, and the more the patient tries to control sleep the less likely sleep will happen." - (MCT)

### Improve Sleep Hygiene

Before you visit a doctor, consult this checklist on good sleeping habits from the UCSF Sleep Disorders Clinic:

- Sleep as much as needed to feel refreshed during the following day, but not more. Spending excessive time in bed is related to fragmented and shallow sleep.
- Waking up at a consistent time in the morning strengthens sleep cycles and can help you fall asleep at similar times each night.
- A steady, daily amount of exercise may deepen sleep. Do not exercise right before bedtime.
- Occasional loud noises, such as traffic and airplanes, disturb sleep even in people who are not awakened by noises and cannot remember them in the morning.

- Excessively warm rooms can disturb sleep.

- Hunger may disturb sleep. So, a light snack such as milk and cereal may help. Both contain tryptophan, an ingredient that promotes sleep.

- Caffeine in the evening disturbs sleep, even in those who feel it does not. Avoid caffeinated beverages at night.

- Alcohol helps tense people fall asleep more easily, but the resulting sleep is more fragmented. Avoid alcohol before bed.

- If you feel frustrated because you cannot sleep, do not stay in bed. Get up, turn on the light and do something different, such as reading or doing simple crafts. Once you are sleepy again, go back to bed.