

Partnership with dental clinics helps patients to quit smoking

August, 2014 – Our partners help us make our communities places where it is easy to be healthy. Dental clinics are ideal partners when it comes to helping people quit smoking because of how smoking affects oral health. With Dr. Gregory Hanson, DDS and Kim Winter, Blue Cross Blue Shield program manager, we are providing training to help dentists and dental hygienists give their patients an opportunity end their smoking habit.



Above, Dr. Greg Hanson, DDS discusses how dental hygienists can impact their patients' health by helping them to quit smoking.

Having a process to talk about the benefits of quitting smoking is an important beginning

There have been studies showing most people want to quit smoking and that their healthcare providers are valued advisors. Dentists and dental hygienists are in the perfect position to talk to patients about quitting because of their time intensive work. What they need is a process to identify, assess, counsel, refer and follow up with patients who report tobacco use. That process training is what Dr. Hanson and Kim Winter helped them with.

Registering the dental clinic in the "Call it Quits Referral Program" is the second step

Dental clinics participating in the workshop registered their clinic in the "Call it Quits Referral Program." The program offers dentists and dental hygienists an easy way to refer patients for tobacco cessation counseling. Once referred, trained health coaches contact patients by phone to explain the program, invite them to enroll and provide one-on-one coaching. The program is at no-cost to all Minnesotans and provides dentists and dental hygienists with a follow-up report about the patient's outcome.

Dr. Xuan Thou from In Harmony Dental Clinic said, "Thank you so much for hosting this workshop. This was great information that we will use in our clinic."

Before this training, only two dental clinics from Bloomington, Edina and Richfield had registered with Call it Quits. Forty-one dental professionals from 18 clinics attended our training, and all 18 will register with Call it Quits Referral Program. Clinic staff will be able to help more patients quit smoking which will also decrease patients' risk for heart disease and cancer. This is another example of how our community can make it easier to be healthy.