Dr. Oz Show on Dental X-rays, Oral Cancer

Your patients may ask you about the safety of dental x-rays or ask questions about oral cancer screening adjunctives based on two nationally-syndicated TV segments on the Dr. Oz Show.

Dental X-rays

On Sept. 28, The Dr. Oz Show covered thyroid cancer and during a portion of the show, the host (Mehmet Oz, MD) said he was concerned whether the radiation patients receive from dental X-rays was a contributing factor in developing thyroid cancer. He then promoted the use of protective leaded aprons and thyroid collars to decrease radiation exposure, a practice the ADA recommends in The Selection of Patients for Dental Radiographic Examinations developed by the ADA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

While the ADA believes the radiation exposure from dental X-rays is low relative to other sources, every precaution should be taken to ensure that radiation exposure is as low as reasonably possible. The ADA recommends that dentists use leaded aprons and leaded thyroid collars (or non-lead equivalents) whenever possible. This practice is strongly recommended for children, women of childbearing age and pregnant women who are especially susceptible to radiation effects. The ADA also recommends that dentists conduct a thorough clinical examination, consider the patient's history, review any prior X-rays, perform a caries risk assessment and consider both the dental and the general health needs of the patient prior to taking any X-rays.

Oral Cancer Examinations and Adjunctive Screening Devices

Oct. 1, The Dr. Oz Show will air a segment entitled, "A Trip to the Dentist Could Save Your Life," that will discuss oral cancer adjunctive screening devices. Earlier this year, the ADA provided the show's...
producers with a systematic review of oral cancer adjunctive screening devices published in the Journal of the American Dental Association. The ADA is often asked to provide information to the media but does not control its ultimate use. The systematic review is available here.

Since that time, the ADA has published Evidence-Based Clinical Recommendations Regarding Screening for Oral Squamous Cell Carcinomas.

During the upcoming ADA Annual Session in Orlando, a special forum on Oral Cancer and Oral Cancer Screening will be presented Oct. 9th, bringing together leading experts to consider the complex, clinically relevant issues and to share the latest developments in this area.

Oral cancer examinations, which are a routine part of dental examinations and regular check-ups that include an examination of the entire mouth, are an important tool in the early detection of cancerous and pre-cancerous conditions in the mouth, according to the ADA.

Here are some points that may be helpful to you in discussing both the use of X-rays and oral cancer examinations with your patients should they have questions:

**Dental X-rays**

- Many oral diseases can't be detected on the basis of a visual and tactile examination alone. Dental X-ray exams are valuable in providing information about your oral health such as early stage cavities, gum diseases, abscesses or some types of tumors. X-rays can help dentists catch and treat oral health problems at an early stage.
- How often dental X-rays should be taken depends on your oral health condition, your age, your risk for disease and any signs and symptoms of oral disease you may be experiencing. Let's talk about what is right for you.
- The American Dental Association has information about dental X-rays on its Web site at ADA.org if you would like more information.

**Oral Cancer**

- People can get lesions, sores or spots in their mouths for a variety of reasons and many times these sores go away on their own and pose no problem. However, if you have a sore or spot in your mouth that has been there for more than two
weeks, it's important that it be evaluated.

- As your dentist, I routinely screen you for oral cancer by carefully examining your mouth, tongue and neck. If I find anything suspicious, I may refer you directly to an oral surgeon or physician for further evaluation or I may screen any suspicious spot or sore in my office (describe the adjunctive screening device you may use). If I conduct a screening in my office, it can help me determine whether a referral is indicated.
- The screening I conduct in my office is just a screening... not a definite diagnosis... only a surgical biopsy can confirm if a lesion, spot or sore is oral cancer.
- The best way to prevent oral cancer is to avoid risky behaviors including tobacco and alcohol use.
- For more information on oral cancer, visit the American Dental Association's Web site at ADA.org and the Journal of the American Dental Association patient page on detecting oral cancer early here.