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Oral Care is for Everyone

The importance of oral healthcare today is not as prioritized as it should be. Originally medicine and dentistry went hand in hand, but now it seems that they have been separated in their important relationship to one another. For my assignment, I chose to explain the importance of oral healthcare and how to achieve this, to my Uncle. I began by explaining to him the way that calculus forms. When it is left undisturbed for a few days, it already begins to worsen and after two weeks gingivitis can develop. I explained to him that in order to keep his dentures and oral health as optimal as possible, he needed to floss and make sure he was removing any food debris that might have gotten caught between the teeth. I had my typodont ready to show the proper way to floss- to ensure that he was forming a “c” around each tooth- and reaching the right depth on his natural teeth. Using the typodont I was also able to further demonstrate the proper way to brush up close. I also had pictures of specific materials for him to use, to achieve the best oral care possible.

I wanted to give a personalized approach to how he should care for his removable partial prosthesis. The first thing he asked me was if he could have an electronic toothbrush to make brushing easier for him. So I began explaining that he needs a specific toothbrush for his natural teeth and one for his removable prosthesis. I showed him a picture of a clasp brush needed just for his removable prosthesis. Then I elaborated that he could use an electric toothbrush if he wished to on his natural teeth. He also wanted to know if he could just use his current toothbrush on his partial dentures but I explained to him that to have the specialized clasp brush would be

better. Since it's made specially for the metal areas and sturdy, as opposed to a toothbrush that would wear down, I recommended the clasp brush but told him it would be okay if he really wanted to use his own. One thing I noticed was that he didn't prioritize continuously visiting a dentist enough and because I know him, I understand that it's due to other personal health issues that he's dealing with first. However, with the proper steps he can at least try to maintain his oral health at home. After the discussion we had I believe he values the importance of oral healthcare even more now.

Initially, I was nervous even though it was a relative, because I was demoing on a real patient and not my cubicle partner, who we're used to speaking to candidly. However I actually really enjoyed this experience because I could tell he would become encouraged and excited when I would give him positive feedback. At first, my uncle was nervous as well, even though we have a personal connection. I didn't understand why at first and then I thought about it after the experience. I believe that having a relationship with someone is not the same as the interpersonal connection as an oral healthcare provider. To know someone is one thing, but looking inside their mouth is another! This experience for me emphasized that because after more discussion it became more of an open conversation. Initially a patient can be very shy or reluctant to see an oral healthcare professional, but building a connection with them could make that easier. I would like to visit an elderly home again but after I graduate. After graduating, I would feel more confident knowing that I know the material. As students, we're learning about the techniques of specific brushing methods and tools to maintain good oral health. But after having experience in the field, I would feel more prepared and ready to answer any possible question confidently. This assignment gave me an insight on how it feels to give in person

advice, on the spot, based on a patient's specific needs.