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### **Learning the ABC's of Proper Brushing**

My friend works for a geriatric cardiology facility as a medical assistant. With the permission of her employer we spoke with two female patients. These two patients agreed and allowed us to visit their home to discuss their daily oral care and to show them how to properly brush and floss their natural teeth, as well as the cleaning and caring for the dentures. We visited two patients, 87 years old Mrs. Concetta and 79 years old Mrs. Jordan. Mrs. Concetta had dentures and Mrs. Jordan had partial denture. Mrs. Jordan is waiting to get an implant done on her mandibular right molars but due to her heart condition she must be on anti-coagulant therapy (warfarin) for at least another two years. Which is why we found her to be the most suitable patient to show her how to care of her oral health.

We were able to bring our typodont, two denture soft brushes, a polygrip adhesion paste, denture cleaning tabs, a denture bath case, a medium regular toothbrush, two tennis balls, dental floss, inter-proxy brushes, a dry mouth oral rinse and a regular oral rinse (Listerine).

We were able to conduct a one-on-one conversation and demonstration each one on our typodont explain thoroughly we also provided visual aid, both ladies understood us well, it was hard for us to give them a verbal explanation as both were hard of hearing. We started with brushing on typodont with modified Bass and modified Stillman's technique to brush the teeth and sweep the brush outward to remove the debris. Then we demonstrated how to floss using dental floss and inter-proxy brushes. My friend showed Mrs. Jordan how to wind-up, up-to 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers between both hands while holding up-to 2 inches apart between the thumb and index finger going into the mouth using up and down motion to wiggle the floss between inter-proximal spaces, also she was advice to pull the floss as she could hurt

her gums and bleed if she snap the dental floss. Then I also showed her how to make use of 18 inches long floss by keeping it un-winding from the middle fingers to the index fingers to use the fresh or cleaned part of the floss rather than using the same dirty floss on all her teeth. I highly emphasized flossing on all the posteriors teeth. I also showed her how to use inter-proxy brushes in between her teeth especially if she would have trouble using floss on the posterior teeth. I also encourage them not to forget to brush their tongue to remove bacteria and refresh their breath. After that I showed her to use Listerine or biotene oral rinse to prevent from xerostomia. Additionally, I gave her instructions on how to use it and how many times a day she should or could use that mouth rinse. She could use the Biotene rinse up-to 5 times a day as needed but not to exceed, otherwise contact her dentist for further directions. She could not rinse with water, eat or drink anything for at least 30 minutes. She understood me very well and found all these tips very helpful.

As we knew their medical history it became easy for us to consider their special needs, such as for Mrs. Jordan who is on coumadin and other medications which caused her to have gum bleed and oral malodor. Due to her medical concerns she was limiting herself from the proper oral care she needs. As I showed her on my typodont how to brush her teeth, thus she understood me better and also I was able to explain to her the importance of caring for her natural dentition since she did not want to lose the rest of her natural teeth as she was experiencing the discomfort of partial denture.

As my demonstration continued, I showed them how to clean their complete and partial denture by removing it and placing it in the denture bath case with the denture cleaning tabs dissolved for overnight. I also showed the technique to remove and clean the debris and food particles after each meal by rinsing and brushing the dentures. I gave them a detailed explanation

on why they should remove their dentures overnight to prevent any lesions in the oral cavity and help the gum rest.

It did not take me 1 hour as both ladies had special needs. They both were hard of hearing and I had to explain everything very slowly, loudly, and demonstrated everything couple of times for them to be able to repeat it back to me. We spent more than 2 hours because we wanted both ladies to be able to understand the importance of oral health.

In addition, I was able to learn new techniques from this experience, we have watched a video on YouTube to make my learnings better, where it showed somebody had demonstrated a technique to cut the tennis ball and attach it on the back of toothbrush handle to regain dexterity as Mrs. Jordan had Rheumatoid Arthritis and Mrs. Concetta have Parkinson's disease which causes her tremors in her hands, making difficult for both of them to hold their brushes for long and with a good grip.

As I stated on the title the importance of brushing and flossing your teeth properly to prevent inflammation from your gums, bad breath or gum disease. Brushing your teeth properly at least twice a day helps prevent tooth decay and gum disease. You can make a fun and easy way by learning the ABCs of proper brushing. **A**void hard scrubbing, **B**rush your teeth for 3-5 minutes and **C**lean all surfaces of your teeth. Using a proper way of brushing and flossing your teeth avoid getting inflammation of your gums and bad breath. Keeping in mind that the ABCs of brushing, the proper technique of using dental floss and the most convenient mouth rinse in your case will help you to maintain good oral hygiene.

The experience was very educational, I honestly did not know how our day would go. At first I was nervous, during the session I was excited. Afterwards I was confident, using every tool of knowledge that we obtain during the course of this program with the addition of viewing

videos and many textbook readings placed us in a comfortable position thus we were prepared for new challenges. I would love to do this again. I feel the more times we go out on the field we are actually enhancing our skills and teaching ourselves how to be better professionals in the near future. This experience was valuable, I can show my loved ones techniques on proper way to maintain a good oral hygiene.