



THE BEACON

March 2006

Dear Friends,

We live in uncertain times. I saw this all too clearly on the second weekend in February, when I participated in a volunteer effort in New Orleans. Driving through the Ninth Ward felt like roaming amongst a ghost town. Boarded-up shacks and stores stood block after block like an abandoned movie set. Traffic lights were down throughout much of the city. Signs and lamp posts were bent over as if a truck hit them. Although the central business district was relatively undamaged and operational, I was told that much of the surrounding area was destroyed. So why haven't these been repaired since Hurricane Katrina hit last August 29th? Simply, no one is there to do it. According to the New Orleans City Business newspaper, the population of the city has dropped from 480,000 to about 130,000. Most who left had everything they owned destroyed in the storm, except perhaps the clothes they wore. They have few reasons to return. No flood insurance. No savings. No job. No hope in the "Chocolate City." Those who have stayed are striving hard to keep the city alive, but they have an uphill battle. Not only are funds and manpower lacking, but hurricane season is coming in four months, and the levee system that broke is still in need of repair.

Though the the situation is tragic, it has brought out the best in people. Healthcare workers came from throughout the country, and some even came from other countries to help. They included physicians, dentists, nurses, optometrists, pharmacists, hygienists, acupuncturists, and assistants. In the dental clinic, 175 volunteers from 38 states and 2 other countries were there to help. Approximately 4,000 patients were seen. In all, about 1 million dollars of free healthcare was delivered that week. One dentist was so excited about the project that he flew back to his office in Chicago after volunteering for a day and compelled his partner to come and work with him the rest of the week. That example embodied the spirit of volunteerism within our camp. And virtually everyone I treated replied with "God bless you" and a handshake or hug after their visit. One woman came afterwards to one of the volunteers and brought a thank-you card with a T-shirt as a gift. That dentist started to cry. As you can see, gratitude was not in short supply.

Personally, I am grateful for having gone because the experience has enlarged my heart for service. As a result, I hope our office will build on this to establish a stronger foundation of service to you. And then, hopefully, you will begin to see your purpose in life fulfilled in serving others more with the abilities and resources you have. May you all be blessed in finding your purpose!

Yours truly,
Constant Lu, DDS

BAD BREATH TIPS

Brush and Floss Your Teeth Properly

Brushing and flossing are two of the most crucial elements for attacking bad breath. Bad breath is caused by bacteria which lingers on your teeth and gums. These bacteria feast on food particles left on your teeth. Sulfur compounds are created, giving breath it's foul odor.

Brushing and flossing remove bacteria and the food bacteria feast on. Unfortunately, many people do not brush long enough to remove bacteria from their teeth. It takes 2-3 minutes to brush all tooth surfaces, yet most people spend less than a minute brushing their teeth.

Few people take the time to floss, allowing odor-producing bacteria to grow rampantly in the spaces between your teeth. Brushing without flossing is like washing only 70% of your body when you bathe - the other 30% remains dirty!

Clean Your Tongue

While brushing and flossing are crucial first steps, brushing and flossing do not always eliminate bad breath. This is because odor-causing bacteria hide deep within the crevices of the tongue.

Drink Plenty of Water

A dry mouth represents the ideal home for odor-causing bacteria which flourish in this type of environment. Saliva normally keeps the mouth moist. Additionally, saliva helps wash away the food particles bacteria feed on. Actions which dry the mouth reduce saliva flow can increase bad breath odor. These include:

- * Use of prescription medication, including antihistamines, antidepressants, and decongestants
- * Excessive talking
- * Exercising
- * Dieting
- * Drinking alcohol or using mouth washes containing a high amount of alcohol
- * Smoking

When drinking water, we stimulate saliva flow, wash away leftover food particles, and moisten the mouth making it less hospitable to odor causing bacteria.

Use Chlorine Dioxide Mouthwashes

Mouthwashes containing chlorine dioxide are the latest advance against bad breath. Conventional mouthwashes only temporarily mask bad breath odor. They may even make the situation worse by drying out the mouth, making it more hospitable to odor-producing bacteria.

Chlorine dioxide has been used for years to sanitize water supplies. In these mouthwashes the chlorine dioxide directly attack the sulfur compounds responsible for bad breath.

Chew Sugarless Gum

If you can't brush after a meal or snack consider chewing sugarless gum. This chewing action helps cleanse the teeth and stimulates the flow of saliva. Saliva in turn further helps to cleanse the mouth and dissolves odorous sulfur compounds. Make sure, however, to use gum which does not contain sugar.

Check for Signs of Gingivitis and Other Dental Problems

Periodontal disease is a bacterial infection of the gums and ligaments which support the teeth. Periodontal disease creates new hiding spots in the gums for odor-causing bacteria. Signs that you may have periodontal disease include:

- * Red or swollen gums
- * Loose teeth
- * Sensitive teeth
- * Pus coming from around the teeth
- * Pain on chewing
- * Tender gums
- * Bleeding gums

When dentists treat periodontal disease they can eliminate the bad breath associated with it.

Get a Dental Check-Up at Least Twice a Year

A twice-a-year dental check-up is a good idea for all adults. This is because people often do not become aware of dental problems until considerable damage has occurred. A dentist can recognize potentially damaging problems early.

New to Our Office. . .

ZOOM II Whitening system as seen on television's "Extreme Makeover"!
See www.discusdental.com for more details.

CEREC technology for same-day porcelain fillings and crowns!
See www.cereconline.com for more details.

Humor Harbor: Creating Smiles

"May I Smoke?"

After completion of a periodontal procedure, a patient scheduled her follow up appointment, then returned to the treatment room. She asked if it would be all right if she smoked. The dentist demurred saying, "We just did surgery; it isn't a good idea."

The patient pondered the advice and then asked, "Suppose I only smoke on the other side of my mouth?"

Patients of the Month: The Smith Family

We recently spoke with Margaret Smith, a patient and friend, about her family. Margaret told us that she first met her husband in Texas while attending a Bible college. Eight years ago, they made their home in Washington state and now reside in Vancouver with their four children.

Margaret was gracious enough to share some of her family's recent experiences with us. In an unexpected turn of events, the Smith family moved out of their home last month and all six family members are sharing two rooms at a local hotel. Their new "home" came at a price. . . their actual home partially burned in a accidental fire. One of their children in a thoughtful gesture decided to light a candle for his parents. Within a short time, some one also carried laundry into the same area, and the candle caused the laundry to catch on fire and one room in their home was burned. Nonetheless, the Smiths pushed on with a positive attitude and made the best of their situation.

While Margaret acknowledges that adjusting to hotel living was difficult at first, she said that they have adapted well to their new environment. New opportunities have also presented themselves, and recently the Smiths made an offer on a new home. Meanwhile, their house continues to be renovated and restored to its original condition. The Smiths also continue to live life fully, enjoying their everyday pursuits. Margaret is homeschooling the kids, and the family enjoys walking their dog and spending evenings cooking, reading, and playing games together. As Margaret aptly put it, "A man makes his plans, but God directs his steps."

Thanks to the Smith family for encouraging us to keep our eyes on the goal and a smile on our faces. We admire your courage and appreciate your friendship!

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