

ACCESS TO CARE

Dental Patient Fights Cancer with a Smile

by Rick Spencer, Obici Healthcare Foundation

"We wanted to make sure Alicia-Jo was never without her ability to smile," recalled Ivor Dental Center Director John Willoughby, DDS. The Dental Center is a subsidiary of Horizon Health Services, Inc.

Alicia-Jo Gough, a Windsor mother of three adult children, is a melanoma cancer survivor. "What started out as a cute little freckle on the side of my nose turned out to be cancerous," she said. As part of her treatment regimen, Alicia-Jo received radiation therapy targeting portions of her face and the lymph nodes in her neck. The radiation exposure to Alicia-Jo's jaw made her teeth more susceptible to oral infections. Radiation treatment helps destroy cancer but at the same time, destroys some bone cells.

Alicia-Jo's physicians continue to watch for the recurrence of cancer.

"Before the cancer treatments, I had bright, white, straight and shiny teeth," she noted. "The radiation made my teeth look like I hadn't brushed them in years."

The treatment of two infected teeth brought Alicia-Jo to the Ivor Dental Center for the first time on an emergency basis in 2010. During her course of treatment, the extraction of infected teeth was performed by an oral surgeon, while the Center performed x-rays, emergency treatment for pain, repairs to Alicia-Jo's own teeth. The Center professionals also prepared her mouth for the new dentures.

Eventually, she lost all her teeth over a 2-year period because the bones could not support them. Her teeth became so brittle that they could be broken

easily. "Partial dentures were made to keep Alicia-Jo's smile intact," the dentist pointed out.

Medicaid paid for the oral surgeries but it did not pay for routine dental care. Obici Healthcare Foundation grants awarded to Horizon Health and the Isle of Wight Christian Outreach Program helped offset her other dental expenses. With a sigh of relief,

Dr. Willoughby said, "Alicia-Jo now has a full complement of teeth."

"Most people don't like going to see the dentist, but I look forward to it," Alicia-Jo said. "Everyone there (Ivor Dental Center) makes me feel so comfortable and gives me reason to smile."

"Before the cancer treatments, I had bright, white, straight and shiny teeth," noted Alicia-Jo.



John Willoughby, DDS, Ivor Dental Center, made the restoration of Alicia-Jo Gough's smile a high priority. Radiation treatments caused Alicia-Jo to lose her teeth.

Pregnant Women: Add Dental Care to Your 'To-do List'

Good Oral Health During Pregnancy Means Healthier Babies and Lower Care Costs

by William Jackson, MD

Many women when they are pregnant, omit routine dental care, because they may think it is not needed; however, that is far from the truth. Not only is a dental visit during pregnancy safe, it is an essential part of good prenatal care and provides a great opportunity to set a child up for a lifetime of good oral health.

Infections in the mouth and changes in diet can affect the oral health of a mother and her baby. What is more striking is that higher levels of hormones can cause inflamed gums, which may lead to gingivitis and periodontal disease – a disease of the gums resulting in severe inflammation around the teeth. Periodontal disease is associated with diabetes, stroke and heart disease, as well as an increased risk of premature birth.

In fact, research by Dr. Marjorie Jeffcoat, DMD, University of Pennsylvania, found that a “pregnant woman with periodontal disease may be up to eight times more likely to deliver prematurely.”

“It may be surprising to learn that pregnant women currently enrolled in Medicaid only have access to an emergency extraction benefit, despite the obvious health and cost benefits when pregnant women can access preventive dental care.”

“...pregnant woman with periodontal disease may be up to eight times more likely to deliver prematurely...”

Improving oral health can make a dramatic impact on overall well-being, for pregnant women and many others in high-risk populations.

Anyone interested in more information on oral health during pregnancy or the relationship between oral health and overall health or getting involved in advocacy efforts to expand access to oral health care, can visit the Virginia Oral Health Coalition’s website at www.vaoralhealth.org or email Coalition Executive Director Sarah Holland at sholland@vaoralhealth.org.

Locally, organizations such as Access Partnership work hard to bring dental care to area residents in need. Learn more at: <http://www.accesspartnership.org>.

This year, the Virginia General Assembly will be considering that pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid have a dental benefit that covers routine dental care.



Dr. Jackson is a member of the Obici Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors.

MISSIONS OF MERCY (MOM) PROJECT COMES TO SUFFOLK

IDENTIFY AND ORGANIZE YOUR CLIENTS

Under the leadership of Ralph L. Howell, Jr., DDS, the Missions of Mercy/Virginia Dental Health Foundation will provide free dental care and basic medical screenings for up to 500 *first come, first served*, low income, uninsured, underinsured, elderly and disabled patients. Spanish translation to be on site.

- We encourage your organization to coordinate for your clients
- Identify those in need
- Communicate the importance of arriving early
- Have them prepared to stay all day (drinks/lunch)



Providing Free Oral Health Care to Western Tidewater

Saturday, March 8, 2014

7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**King's Fork Middle School
350 King's Fork Road, Suffolk**

**To Get Patient Forms
*please visit***

www.obicihcf.org