

INTERDISCIPLINARY PATIENT-CENTERED CARE FOR PATIENTS WITH XEROSTOMIA

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In order to provide the best care for our patients with xerostomia, we need to provide them with interdisciplinary, patient-centered care (PCC). The key to effective interdisciplinary care is accepting that all health care providers (HCPs) bear some degree of responsibility for examining the oral cavity and not assuming it is a dentist's job alone. PCC includes providing care that “explores patients' reasons for visiting the physician, understanding medical issues, and emotional needs, increasing prevention and health initiatives, and enhancing the relationship between patients and providers” (Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Gruber, 2004, p. 364).

INTERDISCIPLINARY ORAL HEALTH CARE

Since the early 2000s, there has been a movement toward the interdisciplinary or interprofessional delivery of health care in order to facilitate communication and effective patient care (Bridges, Davidson, Odegard, Maki, & Tomkowiak, 2011). The purpose of teams of HCPs working together is to improve patient outcomes. With the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, movement began within the United States to incentivize improved quality of care delivered as efficiently and economically as possible (Boynes, Lauer, Deutchman, & Martin, 2017; Nester, 2016). The intention of providing the best patient outcomes at the lowest cost is most likely achieved through the use of interdisciplinary teamwork. In order to be effective, teams of HCPs, including physicians, dentists, speech-language pathologists, and pharmacists, working together must demonstrate the ability to work together for the “purposes of coordinating care and education for their patients; improving overall patient health; promoting self-care; identifying and treating health conditions sooner rather than later; and helping patients effectively manage chronic health conditions” (Nester, 2016, p. 128).

The successful function of teams of HCPs from a range of different disciplines requires autonomy, communication, and respect across members. In 2000, the U.S. Surgeon General produced a report on oral health in the United States calling on HCPs to recognize that the mouth provides us with a “window” on an individual's general health status, noting that “as the gateway of the body,