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It's an emergency!

by Ann-Marie C. DePalma, RDH, MeD, FAADH
amrdh@aol.com

Imagine that one day while you were working in the practice, a middle-aged man suddenly collapsed in your operatory. You might think, quick, get the dentist! But then you would realize, the man is the dentist. Would you know what to do?

In her programs on medical emergencies, Cindy Kleiman, RDH, BS, prepares the dental team for just such a scenario. Knowledge is essential when the unexpected occurs. With a team educated in handling emergencies, the dentist will benefit from calm, informed reactions from his or her team, or as in this example, his life may depend on it.

The program "Medical Histories and Medical Emergencies for the Dental Team" reviews office emergency kits and their use. Cindy requests that participants bring their office emergency kits to the program, and she interactively reviews the kits to increase familiarity and the uses of each drug. She also reviews medical emergencies that participants may encounter, including a personal account. With the population aging, more medically compromised patients are presenting to dental practices. Dental teams need to be aware of emergency situations that may happen to these medically fragile patients.

Objectives of the course include:

- analyzing and using a medical history questionnaire
- recognizing clues in the medical history that require further investigation
- incorporating current blood pressure guidelines in evaluating treatment risks
- discussing and demonstrating items needed in the medical emergency kit
- recognizing the signs of a medical emergency and proper treatment of an acute situation.

The information in Cindy's course helps hygienists respond to emergency situations, whether at work or in their personal lives. Every member of the dental team will benefit from the program, and each should assume a role in the response system.

Cindy presents her program using PowerPoint and a demonstration of various emergency paraphernalia. Her handouts include technical information, and she encourages audience participation by distributing antidepressants (i.e., dark chocolate)! She began presenting continuing education programs after years of teaching at the college level, and her specialty is working with the medically complex dental patient.

In addition, Cindy also presents programs about oral care for the medically complex patient, and the role of the hygienist in the ICU.

In the complex patient program she addresses problems and solutions in treating patients who have experienced traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, or strokes. She includes information on the medical manifestations of these types of disabilities and their associated oral conditions, including products and clinical care techniques that benefit these patients.

The program on the role of the hygienist in the ICU discusses decreasing the incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP). VAP is a deadly condition that occurs in critically ill patients who need breathing assistance from a ventilator. The CDC has stressed the importance of an oral care protocol in an effort to decrease the incidence of this deadly condition.

Cindy graduated from the University of Pennsylvania dental hygiene program and received her BS in education from West Chester State University in Pennsylvania. Her background in treating medically complex patients in alternative settings came from working in the dental department of a major rehabilitation hospital in Philadelphia. Exposure to patients in this setting led to her increasing her knowledge in emergency responses. A move to Phoenix where she taught dental hygiene and dental assisting students led to her naturally spreading the word in continuing education forums.

Cindy feels fortunate to have been able to practice in unique, nontraditional settings. She was encouraged by a number of

influential mentors, and thus feels a sense of duty to help other dental hygienists think “outside the box.”

For information about Cindy, contact jckleiman@cox.net or visit www.cindyspeaking.com.

About the Author

Ann-Marie C. DePalma, RDH, MEd, FAADH, is a Fellow of the American Academy of Dental Hygiene and a member of ADHA and other professional associations. Ann-Marie presents continuing-education programs for hygienists and dental team members and has written numerous articles on a variety of topics. She can be reached at amrdh@aol.com.

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