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The oral impact of addictions

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The oral cavity can be a window to the health of the body. Dentists, as the physicians of the oral cavity, encounter many conditions that are directly or indirectly related to tobacco, alcohol, and other addictions. Dentists may be first to recognize changes in oral health that reflect changes in the overall health of the patient, such as vitamin deficiencies in the alcoholic, or HIV infection in the needle user or sex addict. Some oral manifestations take many years to develop, such as tobacco use and oral cancer. Tobacco abuse is also a leading factor in periodontitis (gum disease). Other addiction-related changes can be dramatic, like ischemic lesions in the cocaine addict, or rapid deterioration in oral health with methamphetamine use. Some addiction-related changes are not well recognized in North America, such as betel quid use and oral submucous fibrosis. This overview of the oral impact of addictions will use cases with clinical photographs to illustrate why former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared, "You're not healthy without good oral health."

Biography

Sara Gordon received a DDS from Dalhousie University, Canada, and MS (Pathology) from University of Western Ontario, Canada. She is a Diplomate of the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Fellow of the Royal College of Dentists of Canada in both Oral Pathology and Oral Medicine, and a Fellow in Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Scotland. She has received over 20 awards for scholarship, teaching, and public service. She is a past president of the Canadian Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology and Oral Medicine. She has given more than 120 lectures and continuing education courses at universities, associations and study clubs throughout North America. She has authored or co-authored nearly 100 journal articles, textbook chapters, posters and abstracts. She is a member of the editorial review board and/or a reviewer for many international journals. She has taught oral medicine and general, systemic, and oral pathology at the University of Detroit Mercy and University of Illinois at Chicago since 1997.

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