

## **New Research Links Periodontal Disease and Stroke**

### ***Important implications for an aging population***

*by Jason S. Kasarsky, DDS*

Perhaps no other generation has had a more profound impact on American society than the so-called "Baby Boomers" -- men and women who were born between 1946 and 1965.

Since Baby Boomers make up such a sizable portion of the consuming public, their spending habits and lifestyles have a powerful influence on our economy.

And right now the vanguard of Boomers are reaching age 60. In fact, a Baby Boomer turns 60 every 11 seconds! Get ready. Baby Boomers are about to impact our healthcare system.

That's why it is important to take note of the latest research findings linking Periodontal Disease and Stroke.

Researchers from Boston University have been focusing on the relationship between periodontal disease and the incidence of stroke in patients 60 years of age and older. The study concentrated on data collected from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, referred to as NHANES III. This is a large cross-sectional survey of the US population.

Researchers have discovered that patients 60 or older who have experienced some degree of *edentulous* -- meaning partial or complete tooth loss -- were more likely to have a history of stroke compared to adults without significant tooth loss. What has not yet been

determined is if periodontal disease is an independent risk factor for stroke -- or a risk marker.

Here's the bottom line. No one can avoid getting older. But, you and I can take proactive measures to prevent Periodontal (gum) Disease. Research findings continue to confirm the connection between severe Periodontal Disease and the increased formation of atherosclerotic plaque. This is commonly referred to as a "hardening" or "furring" of the arteries, which is responsible for myocardial infarction and stroke.

And be aware, it's possible to have Periodontal Disease and not know it.

So, the body of evidence continues to accumulate associating Periodontal Disease with a host of health problems. As we've stressed before, and its worth mentioning again, these include not only heart disease and stroke -- but stomach ulcers, insulin resistance, low birth weight babies, and more.

In summary, science is presenting us with important, actionable data. We know eliminating periodontal infection saves teeth. This in turn helps us lead healthier lives. It is the responsibility of dental professionals to lead their patients to the right side of health.

*Dr. Kasarsky practices dentistry in New York City (212-838-8230). His practice was one of the first in Manhattan to use an extensive array of lasers in daily practice. Dr. Kasarsky, whose hobbies include sculpting and painting, is also recognized for his exceptional skill in cosmetic dentistry. He states, "Dentistry is the perfect blend of art and science. The art of illusion has to be mastered. Matching the personality of the patient with the look of the smile is a step beyond what we are given at birth." On the cutting edge of the latest advances in oral care, Dr. Kasarsky is currently mastering yet another new technology: Botox for dentistry.*