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The Healthcare Hygienist: The Gatekeeper of Overall Health

A Gatekeeper is defined as a person who holds access to something. That person in contemporary health care is the dental hygienist. The advancements in dentistry and medicine observed over the past decade have created a new space where dental hygienists can be viewed as mid-level healthcare providers practicing precision preventive and therapeutic care. Dr. Fones imagined a preventive practitioner as he established the profession of dental hygiene, leveraging the fact that dental disease is purely preventable. Unfortunately, somewhere we lost our way as the dental hygiene profession is leveraged to fit an insurance-driven reimbursement model that provides little to no benefit to oral or overall health. Now there is an opportunity to realign with Dr. Fones's dream and expand beyond to a profession that identifies the importance of inflammation, bleeding, airway, breathing, and genetics and how they impact optimal health. In addition to the fact that systemic diseases often first manifest in the mouth, there is an opportunity to provide patient therapies that shift active periodontal or peri-implant disease into remission and where practitioners can enjoy healthcare-driven purposeful patient care. This course will introduce modern evidence-based systematic protocols and technology centered on biofilm and inflammation management that honors the oral-systemic health connection. This shift in the approach to patient care is timely as public awareness of overall health is expanding, and an active preventive health-centered "biohacking" movement is taking place.

Upon completing this course attendees will: Comprehend the oral microbiota and oral pathogenesis of dental diseases. Understand the connection between inflammation and systemic disease risk. The importance of the R&D portion of the hygiene appointment Patient education strategies that promote compliance and health-centered outcomes Technologies, adjuncts, and oral physiotherapies that improve clinical endpoints, patient compliance, and outcomes.