



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

For immediate release (Offert en français sur demande)

Media Release

Oral Health and the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General Canadian Dental Hygienists Support Improved Oral Health Programs for Indigenous Peoples

November 22, 2017 (Ottawa, ON) — The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is pleased to see that the *2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada* focus on the importance of oral health programs for First Nations and Inuit peoples. This matter is close to the heart of many dental hygienists who recently celebrated Universal Children's Day (November 20) by reminding us all of the need to improve access to high-quality preventive oral health care, especially for children and youth from underserved communities.

Research shows that Indigenous peoples experience unacceptably high rates of oral disease, often requiring treatment that is not available in their communities. As CDHA President Sophia Baltzis notes, "Rates for dental day surgery are close to nine times higher for children from neighbourhoods with high Indigenous populations." Baltzis adds, "This is particularly concerning because most oral diseases can be prevented through individual and provider-based oral care. Dental hygienists are uniquely positioned to deliver oral health services directly in these communities to help prevent and stabilize oral conditions."

The federal government has developed and implemented strategies to reduce the incidence of oral disease in Indigenous communities, including the Children's Oral Health Initiative and the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. However, more can be done. Earlier this year, CDHA commissioned research to explore training programs that would optimize the scope of practice of oral health care providers to better meet the oral health needs of Indigenous peoples and other underserved groups. [Filling the Gap in Oral Health Care](#) presents the results of this research and recommends the creation of a postsecondary program that prepares graduates with the ability to prevent oral disease and alleviate unnecessary pain and suffering.

CDHA calls on governments, educators, and other stakeholders to work together to make this educational model a reality. "Similar to a nurse practitioner, who provides comprehensive health care to their patients, a multiskilled oral health practitioner can offer a broad range of services to populations in greatest need, and, most importantly, reduce oral health disparities across Canada," explains Baltzis. "The time to act is now."

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 28,495 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 19,000 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent dental hygiene practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca.

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