

TEETH: Gum disease often isn’t very painful until it’s really bad

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ease, leading to tooth loss. “It’s a two-way street,” Rickards said. “Not only does diabetes result in more severe periodontal disease but periodontal disease can make it harder to control blood sugar.” After kickoff of the Affordable Care Act in 2014, Oregonians who had little or no previous professional dental care started getting it, most of them through expanded Medicaid. Pendleton dentist Graham McEntire examined some of them. McEntire found abscesses, decayed teeth and chronic infection in gum tissue and bone. “The really bad thing

about gum disease — it often isn’t very painful until it gets really bad,” McEntire said. “It’s the same with periodontal disease — people have it and they don’t know it.” He compared periodontal disease to a rotting fence. Think of your teeth as a fence with posts deep in the ground in the form of bone. “Think of a fence post in the ground with only a third of the post sticking out,” he said. “It’d be super strong. As gum disease progresses, the bone resorbs away until you have less and less of the fence post in the ground, so to speak. Until all of a sudden, there’s hardly anything there.”

The idea of a connection between gum disease and overall health existed 30 years ago when McEntire attended dental school. Since that time, he said, more and more studies have confirmed the suspicions. “When you have chronic infection in your mouth, your body responds with inflammation,” McEntire said. “You allow these cells to circulate in your blood.” Barichello, a dentist who is also the daughter of a dentist, urged people to take time at the sink thoroughly brushing each tooth. She confessed she once thought she was doing an adequate job, but got a huge wakeup call as a dental student.

“In dental school, we did a plaque test where you chew up the red tablets,” Barichello said. “To prepare, I went home at lunch and brushed and flossed.” The dental students crunched the red tablets, swished their saliva, spit and looked in the mirror. The results were humiliating. Some broad areas in her mouth showed up red, revealing dental plaque. “Now I’m a huge believer in electric toothbrushes,” she said. She and Rickards stressed the importance of dentists and physicians working together to treat patients. “With limited collaboration between dentists and doctors, we face something

of a dental divide,” he said. “For decades and decades, we developed in different directions,” Barichello said. Slowly, however, collaboration is happening. Doctors and dentists get together for medical-dental summits, such as the Eastern Washington Medical-Dental Summit last March in Kennewick. “It’s more and more evident in medical circles how harmful (periodontal disease) is,” McEntire said. “We sometimes get referrals from doctors of people who are going to undergo a transplant or cardiac surgery or anything where they’re concerned about chronic infection. They’ll send them to us first and

say we would like you to take out any teeth that are questionable.” With research suggesting strong links between oral and overall health, more scientific studies are underway. “With connections and correlations with diabetes and heart disease, suddenly it opens new pathways for research funding,” Barichello said. “With increased funding, we’re homing in on it.” For those without dental insurance, open enrollment for the Affordable Care Act will continue until Dec. 15 at healthcare.gov.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.

TEST: The team gets together twice a week during lunchtime and reviews questions

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former HHS teacher and current BMCC professor John Lauck. Hughes-Boyd said there were about three fewer teams at this year’s competition than last year, but they were competing with fall sports and concerts for time. Within their schools, students meet throughout the year to practice and compete, testing their knowledge in history, literature, math and science. In competition, there are three 4-person teams in a room, and the teams have a few seconds to talk it over and respond. If the first team to answer gets it wrong, the other teams have a chance to respond. John Cox, a social studies and English teacher in Echo, had 12 high school students at this year’s competition. During the school year, he



Students competed in Hermiston’s Knowledge Bowl, while school board member Dave Smith (center) kept time, and Nancy Lauck, right, read questions.

said, the team gets together twice a week during lunchtime, and reviews questions from previous years.

Though some students find a niche where they carry the team, Cox said he hopes most students will develop

a good sense of general knowledge. There’s some variation, but many of the topics will

coincide with what students are learning in their classes. “There are quite a few questions that overlap,” said Katrina Morrison, an Echo junior whose best subject is math. “They’ll recognize something they just learned that day,” Cox said. “And they’ll look at me, because they know they should know it.” Akiva Barzee, an Echo senior, has been a Knowledge Bowl participant since his freshman year. He is strongest in history and geography, but said the point of the club is not to be the best. “You don’t have to be smart to do it,” he said. “It’s a way to meet new people.” Over the years, questions will get recycled, both in practice and in competition. “You can order ‘pristine’ questions from the website, which have never been used,” said Cox.

“But they’re expensive, and they’re per competition.” Below are some of the questions students had to answer: 1) Which world leader wrote much of his autobiography during a lengthy imprisonment on Robben Island? 2) A “guyot” is a flat-topped variety of what kind of oceanic mountain? 3) What was the predominant religion of the Ottoman Empire? 4) Odysseus’ journey home took how many years? Answers: 1) Nelson Mandela 2) A “seamount” 3) Islam 4) 10 years

“There are quite a few questions that overlap”
— Katrina Morrison, Echo High School junior

PREMIUMS: Living within 5 miles of a fire station is beneficial

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while setting premiums, but the lowered number is a “very positive thing” for the Hermiston-Stanfield area. The ISO is an independent actuarial financed by dues from insurance companies, and those companies use data gathered by the ISO — including the fire district ratings — when calculating premiums for homeowners and business insurance. The new class three rating should reflect in lower premiums as people renew or purchase policies. “The lower the rates, the lower the protection class, the more attractive this area becomes,” he said. In an announcement about the lowered ISO rating Thursday, the fire district

said the new class three rating puts UCFD in the top 8 percent of the nation. “The ISO change here is huge for the communities and those areas within (5) miles of a fire station,” Chief Scott Stanton said in a statement. “It really shows a lot of the hard work that the water departments, county 911 dispatch and the fire district have put into this accomplishment.” He credited the 2016 merger between Stanfield and Hermiston fire districts with making the improvements that led to the ratings change possible. Further class changes could be in UCFD’s future. Operations chief Jim Forquer said there are still areas the district could improve upon, particularly

when it comes to preventing items, such as building inspections. Forquer said the UCFD administration and board are also looking at how they could add a fifth fire station to UCFD’s properties. Right now, he said, it’s just in the talking stage, but they are looking for property or an existing building on the east side of Hermiston, somewhere toward Highway 37 and Walls Road. Being able to put personnel and equipment out there would put almost all of the fire district within 5 miles of a station. Forquer said there are many factors that help UCFD achieve a good ISO rating. The merger strengthened their staffing, training and equipment scores and they have strong working

relationships with neighboring fire districts. He said the district is helped by having a five water tenders, which benefits rural areas where fire hydrants aren’t plentiful. “We have a fairly robust

water tender support system, so we can have a lot of water on the road,” he said. Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

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