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### Changing attitudes to dentistry and our approach

Posted by **Erica Kilburn** on Saturday, 13 June 2015 in **Product Updates**

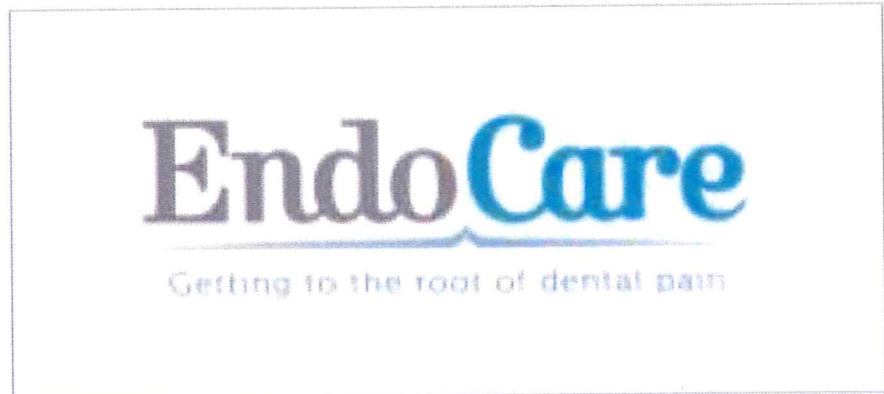
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**The public perception of dentistry is not a flattering one. Recent news stories in the media serve to highlight this. The problem is that we don't tell people what we do.**

We don't inform and educate the public around the benefits to their general health of taking care of their teeth. They think that all we do is fix holes and extract teeth and apply expensive crowns; but of course we do much more than shouting about it.

A perfect example of this is in the relationship between diabetes and periodontitis. There are clear, established links. The treatment of one can positively affect the other, but when was the last time you took the time to share this with your patient?

Recently, I met Dr Leticia Casanova, a Spanish Dentist who trained as a periodontist at New York University and is currently studying the connection between diabetes and periodontal disease, so she has a particularly relevant perspective. She has recently published an article in the *BDJ* entitled, *Diabetes and Periodontal Disease: A Two-Way Relationship*. The article explains that if you control people's periodontal disease, you can actually see a genuine reduction in their diabetic complications.

A measure of how well a diabetic is coping is in their glycated haemoglobin levels and this is recorded as a percentage. A 1% reduction reduces the risk of heart disease and damage considerably. The article explains that being diabetic leads to developing periodontitis and that having periodontitis can also affect the body's glycaemic index (in people with diabetes). So if you control somebody's periodontitis, through delivering first class periodontal treatment, and then measure their haemoglobin, it is possible to see a drop of up to a half per cent and this will really make a difference to their health.

The article from Dr Casanova effectively shows the interrelationship between the two problems and explains how dental treatment that positively affects systemic disease. This leads back to my initial point, that we don't do enough for our patients. If general dentists were seen to take a more active lead in the medical management of their patients, maybe this would raise the profession in the eyes of the public?

The prevalence of diabetes is phenomenal, and periodontitis is three times more likely to affect those who have diabetes. If diabetics become edentulous, affecting how they eat - and this is not to mention the already well established links between periodontitis, diabetes and heart disease. So, if through making changes in our approach we are able to get a patient's diabetes under control, we would be performing a far greater public service.

We should therefore take every opportunity to play a bigger role in our patients' general well being. Not just

cancer scans, which are vital and we should all already be doing, but maybe through routinely measuring blood sugar levels too, so that people will begin to see us not just as people who fix holes, but as doctors that can prevent a condition.

For further information please call EndoCare on 020 7224 0999

Or visit [www.endocare.co.uk](http://www.endocare.co.uk)

[i] L. Casanova, F.J. Hughes and P.M Preshaw, *Diabetes and Periodontal disease: a two-way relationship*, *British Dental Journal* 2014; 116: 433-437, available at: <http://www.nature.com/bdj/journal/v217/n8/full/sj.bdj.2014.907.html> [accessed 23/06/2015]

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Erica Kilburn

Following an extensive and successful career within dental, medical and healthcare publishing, Erica joined EKC Communications Ltd in April 2000. EKC is primarily a PR and media agency for the dental market work across a number of healthcare markets. The company's ethos has remained the same; to provide in-house media support, always putting our client's needs and goals first.

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