

Is Periodontal Disease a Risk Factor for Preterm Low Birth Weight Infants?

In the Spring 2005 issue of *Dispatch*, members were informed about the College's one-day symposium on "Oral Health: A Window to Systemic Disease," that was held in Toronto on February 4, 2005. The symposium included presentations by respected researchers and academics to illuminate the current state of the evidence for possible associations between periodontal and systemic diseases.

PEAK (Practice Enhancement and Knowledge) is a College service for members, whose goal is to regularly provide Ontario dentists with copies of key articles on a wide range of clinical and non-clinical topics from the dental literature around the world. It is important to note that PEAK articles may contain opinions, views or statements that are not necessarily endorsed by the College. However, the PEAK advisory board is committed in its desire to provide quality material to enhance the knowledge and skills of member dentists.

If you have any suggestions for subjects to be addressed by PEAK, or questions about this membership service, please contact:

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In addition, PEAK announced that it would be providing members with a series of five articles written by the presenters at the symposium. The first article, by Drs. Christopher McCulloch and Michael Glogauer, served as an introduction to this important topic and the series. The second article, by Drs. Howard Tenenbaum, Avi Shelemay, Michael Goldberg and Jim Lai, explored the associations between periodontitis and cardiovascular disease. The third article, by Dr. Debora Matthews, reviewed the relationship between diabetes and periodontal disease. The fourth article, by Dr. Susan Sutherland, examined the marked differences between the sexes with respect to systemic and oral health issues.

With the current issue of *Dispatch*, PEAK is pleased to provide members with the fifth and final article in the series, "Is Periodontal Disease a Risk Factor for Preterm Low Birth Weight Infants? A Systematic Review," by Drs. Sandra Cassolato, Austin Chen, David Chvartzaid and Melissa Sander. The article identifies and evaluates the available evidence to determine if periodontal disease (PDD) is a causal risk factor for preterm low birth weight (P/LBW) infants and whether periodontal intervention is a valid preventive strategy.



Key points to consider:

- Until lately, the association with P/LBW was considered the clearest link yet established between PDD and a systemic condition. Recent studies, however, have cast doubt on the strength of this association, such that the available evidence is now seen as contradictory.
- Both P/LBW and PDD are widely encompassing entities, with numerous sub-classifications and conditions. It is possible that a relationship may exist among certain subgroups of patients.
- Nevertheless, the available evidence does not support a definitive conclusion that PDD is either a causal risk factor or even a risk marker for P/LBW.
- Moreover, the validity of periodontal intervention as a preventive strategy for P/LBW has not been proven.