



Delta Dental of Minnesota

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Heather Hofmeister

(651) 994-5210

hhofmeister@deltadentalmn.org

Delta Dental of Minnesota and Hazelden Foundation Collaborate to Create Guide for Dental Professionals on Meth and Oral Health

May 1, 2008 (EAGAN, Minn.) – Delta Dental of Minnesota (Delta Dental) announced today that it has collaborated with the Hazelden Foundation to create a first of its kind, comprehensive guide called *Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals*. The guide includes the most recent clinical research about methamphetamine (meth) use and its often devastating effects on a user’s oral health.

“At first glance, the effects of meth seem overwhelming,” said Stephen Wagner, D.D.S., co-author of *Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals*. “We see virulent, rampant caries, periodontal disease, and early tooth loss in patients who have used meth. Organized dentistry must raise public awareness of the solutions available through clinical services and preventative care. Dental professionals are in a position to reduce the impact of meth, as they may be one of the first to recognize a patient’s condition and to offer assistance.”

According to Wagner, there are three elements, which when combined lead meth users to experience escalated dental decay. “Due to the stimulants found in meth, addicts often clench and grind their teeth so excessively that it causes teeth to loosen, fracture or possibly crack in half,” he said. “During binging, meth addicts also tend to neglect their oral hygiene, which causes increased plaque, gingivitis and periodontitis, receding gums and tooth loss. Meth can also lead to a reduction in saliva flow—this can lead users to drink sugary soft drinks, which in turn creates an acidic environment around teeth. We feel these signs can be helpful for dental professionals.”

“We are pleased to form another great collaboration, this time with Hazelden Foundation, a national nonprofit organization renowned for its comprehensive approach to treating and responding to issues around addiction,” said Ann Johnson, director of Community Affairs at Delta Dental of Minnesota. “While statistics show that meth use is on the decline in some areas, and is not used as commonly as other illicit drugs, many Minnesota counties continue to report that meth is their most serious drug problem. This is because of the devastation meth causes users and the communities where the drug is produced.”

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Meth users are often young people between the ages of 18 and 25 and are not familiar with, or are in denial about the devastating effects of the drug. In Minnesota, more than 3.8 percent of meth users fall into this age demographic.*

The guide provides information about meth, how it can affect the dental health and lives of those addicted to it, and how best to approach and care for a patient with meth-affected teeth. The guide also offers:

- Signs and symptoms of meth users
- Sample questions for dental professionals to ask patients who may have used meth
- Protocol for treating a patient with meth-affected teeth and resulting oral decay
- Meth resource directory

“We appreciate having this additional resource for dentists, as they are encountering patients with devastating dental disease related to meth use,” said Dr. John R. Luther, Senior Vice President, Dental Practice and Professional Affairs at the American Dental Association. “Hazelden is able to educate both the public and dental professionals about the addictive process. In this publication, Hazelden collaborated with dental professionals who can share their clinical experience in treating people with ‘meth mouth’. We are appreciative of the funding provided for this endeavor by Delta Dental of Minnesota.”

Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals was developed in collaboration with the Hazelden Foundation. Funding was provided by Delta Dental of Minnesota. Contributors to the guide included **Charles Tatlock**, D.D.S., M.P.H., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico School of Medicine, **Stephen Wagner**, D.D.S., private practice and **Nancy Williams**, R.D.H., Ed.D., Professor of Dental Hygiene, University of Tennessee Health Service Center.

A free PDF of the guide is available at www.deltadentalmn.org. The authors are also developing two free PowerPoint presentations on meth mouth that can be used for community, public health and professional audiences. A script to frequently asked questions will accompany each presentation. These presentations will be available summer of 2008 at www.deltadentalmn.org.

About Hazelden

Hazelden Foundation, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden’s comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of individual, family and professional needs, including addiction treatment and continuing care services for youth and adults, publishing research, higher learning, public education and advocacy. For more information on Hazelden, visit www.hazelden.org.

* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Office of Applied Studies. (2006) *State Estimates of Past Year Methamphetamine Use*, Results from the Drug Use and Health Report, Issue 37.

About Delta Dental of Minnesota

Delta Dental of Minnesota is one of the largest providers of dental benefits in the Upper Midwest, serving more than 8,300 Minnesota-based purchasing groups with 3.2 million members nationwide. Delta Dental of Minnesota is an independent, nonprofit health services company and is a licensee of Delta Dental Plans Association, the largest dental benefits provider in the United States. Delta Dental's mission has been to serve the oral health needs of Minnesotans by providing access to a range of quality, affordable dental benefit plans and support educational programs that help maintain and improve oral health. For more information about Delta Dental of Minnesota, visit www.deltadentalmn.org.

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