



Delta Dental of Minnesota

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**Diabetes Screening for Minnesota Public Programs  
at Routine Dental Visits**

*First-in-the-nation pilot program targets undiagnosed diabetics*

**December 21, 2007 (Eagan, Minn.)** — Delta Dental of Minnesota today announced a demonstration project that will enable dentists in select clinics to work with patients in Minnesota state health care programs to conduct simple diabetes screening tests, which may help reduce the incidence of undiagnosed diabetes. This demonstration project will not involve commercial dental business or clients.

This first-of-its-kind initiative is being introduced in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and three health plans: Medica, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and Metropolitan Health Plan, which contract with the state to provide health care services, including dental care for clients enrolled in one of three Minnesota (non-commercial) state health care programs. Institutions participating in the demonstration project include Hennepin County Medical Center, the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis, and the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry.

When public program patients enrolled in these health plans visit the dentist and display common diabetes symptoms such as periodontal disease and high blood pressure, the dentist will offer to perform a diabetes screening if the patient has not previously been diagnosed with diabetes. If the screening is positive, the dentist will advise the patient to follow up with their family physician.

According to the American Diabetes Association, approximately 21 million Americans have diabetes, but approximately 7 million are unaware that they have the disease. The total annual economic cost of diabetes in 2002 was estimated to be \$132 billion, or one out of every 10 health care dollars spent in the United States.

“Existing clinical evidence shows that many undiagnosed diabetics are prone to periodontal disease and hypertension,” said Sheila Riggs, D.D.S, DMSc, president and CEO of Delta Dental of Minnesota. “We have a strong tradition of working in concert with our health plan partners to improve the health of Minnesotans. Engaging dental offices in screening at-risk patients is a logical next step.”

*(more)*

"The Minnesota Board of Dentistry recognizes this opportunity for dental professionals to be more broadly involved in efforts to provide early detection," said Marshall Shragg, executive director, Minnesota Board of Dentistry. "Periodontal disease and hypertension are known co-risk factors of people with diabetes. If the pilot program demonstrates results, the implications will be profound as it could change the expectations and role of traditional dentistry."

"One of our biggest challenges is to identify people with diabetes early in the course of their disease. Data shows that such early intervention can lead to fewer complications," said Richard Kahn, Ph.D., chief scientific and medical officer, American Diabetes Association. "In Minnesota there are approximately 226,000 individuals who are diagnosed with diabetes and potentially thousands of others who remain undiagnosed. We are excited about the role dentists can play in helping identify those at-risk individuals."

The objective of this project is to work toward the vision of the Minnesota Diabetes Plan 2010, facilitated by the Minnesota Health Department, where early detection is increased through consistent screening of populations most at risk.

#### ***About Delta Dental of Minnesota***

*An innovator in oral health benefit plans, Delta Dental of Minnesota is an independently operated, nonprofit dental services company that administers self-insured and prepaid dental service plans. Delta Dental serves more than 8,200 employer groups with 3.1 million members in Minnesota and across the nation. Delta Dental of Minnesota's oral health education, community outreach and philanthropic program focuses primarily in the area of oral health education and prevention.*

*Delta Dental of Minnesota is headquartered in Eagan, and has a customer service center on Minnesota's Iron Range. For more information about Delta Dental of Minnesota, visit [www.deltadentalmn.org](http://www.deltadentalmn.org).*