

ORAL HEALTH FOR ALL: UNDERSTANDING AND IMPACTING ORAL HEALTH DISPARITIES



Why DentaQuest Cares About Oral Disparities?

A Health Challenge Few Recognize

Patients often view dental hygiene as a separate concern unrelated to overall health and wellness. However, studies show a link between gum disease and numerous chronic, systemic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, stroke, psoriasis, and even complications in pregnancy like increased likelihood of preterm births.¹

Dental caries is the most common chronic transmissible disease affecting U.S. children.²

5X 

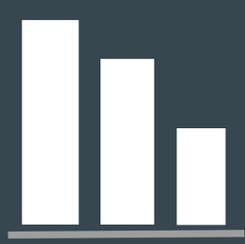
It is five times more common than asthma.³

7X 

And, seven times more common than hay fever.⁴

A Disease of Disparities

42%



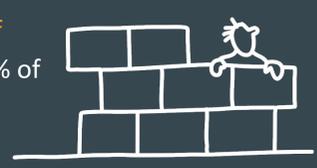
Percentage of adults with incomes below the FPL who have tooth decay--that's 3x more than adults with incomes above 400% of the FPL.⁶

42% of African American adults and 36% of Hispanic adults have untreated dental issues, compared to 22% of Caucasians.⁷



Rural areas experience higher rates of dental disease and edentulism (missing teeth) with lower preventative utilization rates.⁸

Barriers such as cost and fear of discrimination result in only 10% of the surveyed LGBT population reporting regular dental visits.⁹



A Costly Emergency Solution

Treating non-traumatic dental conditions in the Emergency Department (2011) costs us¹⁰:

\$1.87 BILLION

up to **79%**

The percentage of dental ED visits that could be diverted to community settings.¹¹



For many low-income children, the ED is the first and last resort because their families struggle to find a dentist who either practices in their area or accepts Medicaid patients.¹²



Prevalence increases with age, rising from 1 in 4 U.S. children aged 2 to 5 years to 9 out of 10 adults aged 20-64.⁵

Our Strategic Priorities

Core Activities & Achievements

1 To raise awareness and internal consciousness of oral health disparities

2 To formalize strategies needed to identify and address disparities

Information Gathering



We performed an internal scan of DentaQuest activities and researched best practices on measuring and addressing disparities.

Data Availability



We collaborated with legal counsel to identify permissible uses of data and as a result procured external data for our analysis.

Leadership Support



We worked with leadership to ensure there was support/budget to get staff resources and procure external data for analysis.

Awareness Activities



We conducted both DentaQuest internal initiatives and activities for the public to highlight the issue of oral health disparities.

Lessons Learned



Leadership commitment is critical. There is a need to educate and engage staff and providers at all levels.



Oral Health Disparities issues must align with the business imperatives to gain and sustain momentum.

We are swimming in data that cannot be used to measure and address disparities. We need to engage stakeholders in improving data accessibility.

