

Pain Is NOT in the Job Description: Training for Dental Hygienists

To prevent job-related pain for dental hygienists, California created a five-part video series on ergonomics. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) successfully partnered with the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), Ergonomics Program and the California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) to produce and distribute the series.

The Challenge

Many dental hygienists work in pain or know others suffering from musculoskeletal disorders (MDSs). Dental hygienists and their employers can prevent MSDs by paying attention to ergonomics. This means taking practical steps to design or arrange the workplace for safe and efficient work. Research has shown that using larger instruments and making other simple ergonomic changes can reduce the risk of MSDs for dental hygienists. Our team wanted to design a communications product and process that would reach dental hygienists who were just starting their careers, as well as more experienced clinicians.

The Response

Dental hygienists and their trade group were involved in creating this “digital story” project from the beginning. The San Francisco Component of the CDHA acted as an advisory group that provided messages, themes, and interviews for the videos. The dental hygienists appeared in the videos, telling their personal stories. They reviewed both the script and the final products. Because of their input and feedback, the stories and prevention messages were tailored to resonate with new as well as experienced dental hygienists. UCB provided the research-based technical content in the series. The statewide CDHA endorsed and agreed to promote the videos. The Spring 2015 edition of its trade journal features the videos in an article co-authored with CDPH and UCB. CDHA will provide Continuing Education Units to dental hygienists who complete the “home study” course based on reading the article and viewing the videos.

The Impact

CDPH's January 2015 e-newsletter on this topic reached almost 4,600 recipients. The CDHA journal and newsletter reach over 4,000 members by mail and electronically. Dental hygienists in California (and their employers) can now learn about how to prevent MSDs and complete continuing education units by taking a CDHA home-study course based on the online video series.



“Pain isn't part of the job. We should not be going to work and feeling pain.”
- **Shelly Azevedo**, former clinical dental hygienist

View the home study course or videos:

CDPH - <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb/Pages/ErgonomicsDentalHygiene.aspx>
YouTube - <http://bit.ly/1x01B69>