

LOVE EXPRESSED THROUGH HEALTHY SMILES!!

SADJ February 2022, Vol. 77 No. 1 p2

Dr Nthabiseng Metsing, Head: Professional Development, SADA

Valentine's Day is an annual festival to celebrate romantic love, friendship and admiration. Every year on 14 February people celebrate this day by sending messages of love and affection to partners, family and friends. Looking at the history, this is a day whose inception can be traced to a tragedy that became a "Love story" that has become the day as we know it and celebrate today.

While Valentine's Day is celebrated in most countries, different cultures have developed their own traditions for this commemoration. In some parts of the world Valentine's Day is observed as a day for expressing love between family members and friends, rather than that of romantic couples. Some traditions include leaving sweets/chocolates and gifts for children and others include acts of appreciation between friends.

This year SADA would like to extend the love to the whole dental community and encourage its members to show the same love to their patients by continuing to put smiles on their faces and making them fall in love with these smiles. Also encouraging good oral hygiene practices so that they can also in turn show some love to their teeth and mouth in general.

Since this is the month of love, dentists have an opportunity to not only give beautiful smiles but also fresh breathes. A kiss is probably on the list for many people this Valentine's Day. Before getting comfortable with loved ones this year, it is important to make sure the mouth is in good health because, as it turns out, a kiss is more than just a kiss. Let us encourage society to not suffer in silence because they either don't know where to go or they are too anxious/afraid to visit a dentist. Bacteria is a big

culprit of bad breath, so regular habits like brushing and flossing should especially be encouraged. Other ways to encourage patients to stay fresh are over-the-counter antimicrobial mouthwashes or chewing sugar free gum. Both can freshen their breath instantly and get saliva flowing, especially after they have eaten foods with a strong scent.

The month of February is also National Cancer Prevention Month. As we are aware that a lot of patients are not knowledgeable enough when it comes to the different cancers that affect the oral cavity, we would like to encourage members to raise awareness about the prevention and clinical presentation of the different oral cancer lesions. Oral cancer accounts for roughly three percent of all cancers diagnosed annually. As dentists we can use prevention and education as our love language this month in order to save the livelihood of patients under our care.

Oral cancer most often occurs in people over the age of 40 and affects more than twice as many men as women. Most oral cancers are related to tobacco use, alcohol use (or both), or infection by the human papilloma virus (HPV).

There are many more reasons than those stated above that patients can visit the dentist for and addressing these problems can be a beautiful love language for patients. Addressing dental problems can boost patients' self confidence and this may have a positive impact on their interactions with others.

Let us continue to bring healthier, brighter and beautiful smiles to society. HAPPY VALENTINES' DAY to the whole Oral Health Community.

