

APHA and Colgate-Palmolive Announce National

Responding to the Surgeon General's National Oral Health Report, APHA and Colgate-Palmolive Expand Grassroots Effort to Improve the Oral Health of America's Underserved Children.

BOSTON (Nov. 14, 2000) - Today the U.S. Surgeon General joined the Executive Director of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the executive in charge of worldwide oral health education and professional programs for Colgate-Palmolive, and APHA experts to announce a public-private partnership to improve oral health among the nation's children. The announcement was made at a news conference held at the Sheraton Boston during the APHA's 128th Annual Meeting. More than 13,000 public health professionals are gathering here this week to discuss the theme of the meeting -- eliminating health disparities in America.

One important topic on the conference's agenda is the disproportionate level of oral health problems among racial, ethnic and poor children. In his first-ever report on oral health, the U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D. Ph.D. called the spread of dental and oral disease a "silent epidemic" in this country. He described how economically disadvantaged and minority children are not getting the oral health care they need, and deserve. For example:

- For every child without medical insurance there are 2.6 children without dental insurance.
- Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease - five times more common than asthma. In poor communities, this number is even higher.
- Almost 47 percent of all low-income Hispanics and African-Americans have untreated tooth decay.
- Inadequate education and limited access to dental professionals contributes to untreated tooth decay in more than one-third of all children from low-income families.

In his report, the Surgeon General reiterates the need for coalitions of organizations from all sectors to work together to address this issue.

The partnership announced today between APHA and Colgate-Palmolive will expand Colgate's flagship oral health initiative, Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures. The program is a community-based oral health initiative that provides free dental screenings and education to millions of underserved children in the U.S. each year. The APHA partnership will help Colgate expand the reach of this oral health education program, specifically concentrating on infants, toddlers and their families to prevent early childhood oral disease. Elements of the plan include the creation of public education posters, publication of news articles and advertisements promoting oral health and the distribution of oral health kits to educators and families.

"The members of the APHA are public health specialists who understand the problems of oral health," says Mohammad Akhter, M.D., MPH, Executive Director of APHA. "We look forward to working with Colgate to reach even more at-risk children. We believe that this program is effective because it focuses on children and their families in the communities in which they live and delivers a health message in a way that's meaningful to them."

"The APHA and Colgate-Palmolive share a mission to provide a public service to support healthier communities across the nation," says Dr. Marsha Butler, Worldwide Director, Professional Marketing and External Relations, Colgate-Palmolive, who announced the partnership at the news conference today. "That's why we are working together to implement this plan to improve the oral health of minorities and the poor in this country."

The Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures program, which started in the U.S. in 1991, is a community-based oral health education and preventative treatment program for children. The core elements of this oral health initiative are an in-school curriculum, community awareness activities and mobile dental vans, which house a traveling dentist office. Staffed by local volunteer dentists, the vans visit schools and community centers, offering free preventative dental services and treatment referrals for children. To date, the program has reached more than 20 million children in the U.S. This year alone, the program will provide free dental screenings and education to five million children.

The American Public Health Association is the largest and oldest organization of public health professionals in the world with more than 50,000 members. Over 13,000 public health professionals are expected to attend APHA's 128th Annual Meeting in Boston, November 12-16.

A Video News Release (VNR) about this news conference and the Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures Oral Health Education Program will be available via satellite on Tuesday, November 14th from 2:30 PM- 2:45 PM Eastern on C-Band Satellite: Telstar 6 / Transponder: 8 / Downlink: 3860 MHz (H) / Audio: 6.2 & 6.8. The VNR will re-feed on Thursday, November 16th at 1:30 PM -

1:45 PM Eastern on C-Band Satellite: Telstar 4 / Transponder: 9 / Downlink: 3880 MHz (V) /Audio: 6.2 & 6.8. For more information about the VNR, please contact D.S. Simon Productions by phone at 212- 736-2727 or by email at news@dssimon.com.

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