

Press Release

For Immediate Release
August 13, 2020

Contact:
LaVette C. Henderson,
Executive Director
Lhenderson@ndaonline.org

Officers:

Sheila L. Armstrong, DDS, FICD, FACD
President

Cheryl Y. Lee, DDS
Chairman of the Board

Pamela Alston, DDS, MPP
President-Elect

Marlon D. Henderson, DDS
Vice President

Nicole Cheek, DDS
Secretary

Kim A. Smiley, DDS, MS
Treasurer

Hugh V. Mcknight, DDS
Assistant Treasurer

Wayne D. Walker, DDS
Speaker of the House

Roderick H. Adams, Jr., DDS, FACD
Vice Speaker of the House

John T. Daniels, II, DDS, FICOI, FICD
Immediate Past President

LaVette C. Henderson, CMP, HMCC, FACD
Executive Director

National Dental Association and World Health Organization: Worlds Apart on Recent Recommendation

Greenbelt, MD - The National Dental Association (NDA) supports the work of the World Health Organization, but cannot in good conscience agree with its recent recommendation that “check-ups, dental cleanings, and preventive care be delayed until there has been sufficient reduction in COVID-19 transmission rates”.

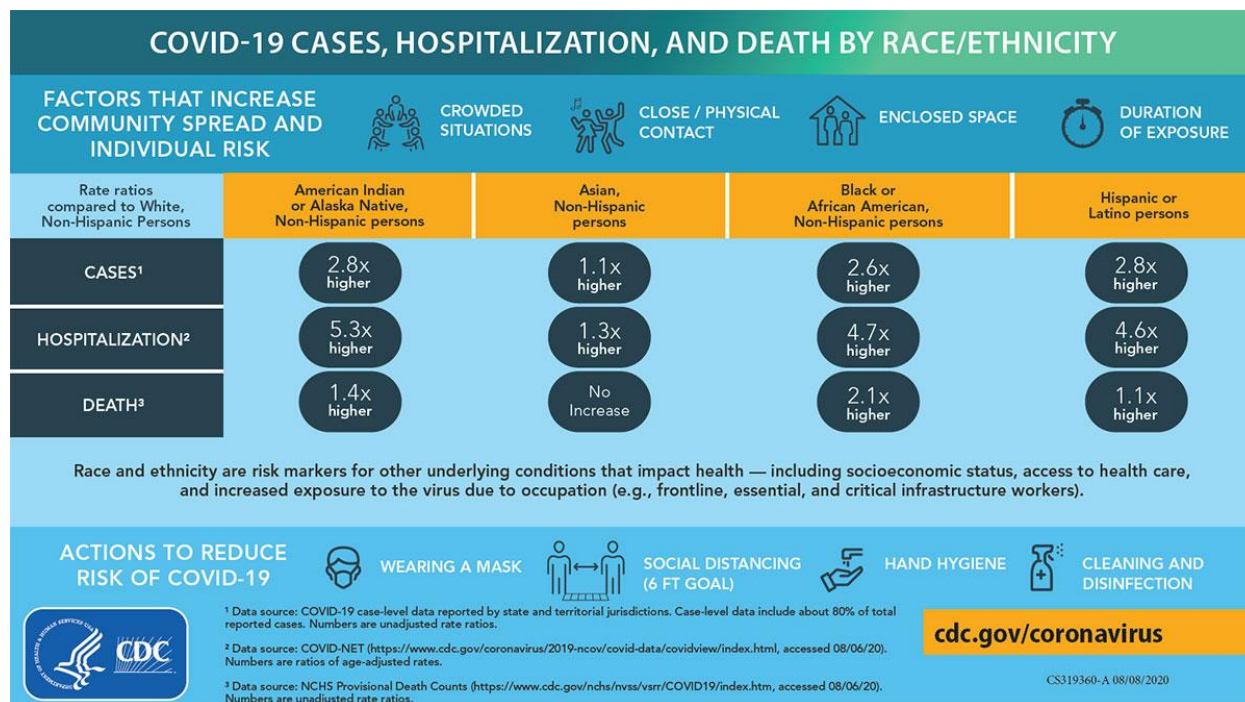
The NDA represents the oral health providers, predominantly African American, who are essential safety net providers in underserved communities of color. Sixty-five percent of NDA members are Medicaid providers and along with other African American health professionals, they are the lifeline for Black and Brown populations. Additionally, using the WHO description of the nature and work of dental providers, some media outlets have reported that oral care providers have heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 and passing it to patients.” The inference that dental providers are transmitting the virus to their patients is unsubstantiated and unfounded. In consultation with Federal officials, we are unaware of any transmission of the virus from dental practitioner to patient. In fact, for nearly four decades, dentists have adhered to and mastered stringent infection control and universal protocols. With the onset of COVID-19, the dental profession has adopted additional infection control and safety protocols, including pre-appointment screening questions, temperature checks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), air filtration systems, aerosol transmission mitigation, surface disinfection with chemical fogging or UV light.

Oral health is essential to overall health. Current research links chronic periodontal disease with COVID-19 complications, indicating that poor plaque control can negatively affect the lungs of hospitalized COVID-19 patients. [V Sampson et al. *Could there be a link between oral hygiene and the severity of SARS-COV-2 infections?* British Dental Journal 228, 971-975 (2020)] [S Molayem, CC Pontes. *The Mouth-COVID Connection (MCC)*. Accepted for publication for the October 2020 issue of the Journal of the California Dental Association, reported in Dental Products Report, August 7, 2020] Oral hygiene and periodontal therapy improve health and protect against COVID-19 complications. As of August 6, 2020, the CDC reported that African Americans have 2.6x more number of COVID-19 cases than their white counterparts; 4.7x more hospitalizations; and 2.1x more deaths. This data is particularly significant for NDA members, essential safety net dental providers, whose patients are predominantly African American.

NDA Family Organizations

The importance of good oral health for patients with compromised immune systems and underlying conditions cannot be overstated. Reports from NDA dental practices that have reopened in underserved communities reveal that the Coronavirus lockdown continues to have a negative impact on dental health. Telehealth, now routine, often results in new prescriptions (for hypertension or depression) that have a negative impact on dental health. The majority of NDA practitioners have a majority of patients with underlying conditions. Many of these patients remain in self-imposed quarantine, still afraid to make dental appointments despite the impeccable precautions that have been put in place for their protection. Delaying overdue prophylaxes will further compromise patients with high risk and chronic diseases making them more susceptible to COVID-19 and its complications. Dental professionals are complying with state recommendations and are following the CDC's [Framework for Healthcare Systems Providing Non-COVID-19 Clinical Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Of paramount importance is maintaining the safety and health of dental providers, their patients and their staff.

Dr. Sheila L. Armstrong, President of the National Dental Association stated, *“The delay or suspension of essential oral health care procedures has been proven to increase the rate of morbidity in the underserved communities that have been most affected by Coronavirus. It is the continuation of these essential services that may prove to be a mitigating factor in the survival rate of this vulnerable population that we serve. **Returning to the dentist is safe. Dentistry may be the game changer in this global pandemic.**”*



###

About the NDA: The National Dental Association promotes oral health equity among people of color by harnessing the collective power of its members, advocating for the needs of and mentoring dental students of color, and raising the profile of the profession in our communities.