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CARIES RISK MANAGEMENT **CAMBRA**

Strategy for battling caries
puts emphasis on prevention



The management of dental caries—once dominated by restorative procedures—is shifting to an approach grounded in prevention and curative clinical protocols. At the heart of this new thinking is caries management by risk assessment (CAMBRA). This strategy supports caries management by identifying risk factors associated with the disease. CAMBRA is easily implemented in any dental office.

Help Wanted: right tool for treatment

As many as 92 percent of adults age 20 to age 64 have had caries in their permanent teeth, according to a recent NIDCR study. Among children dental caries has become the most common pediatric disease. Left unchecked caries becomes a gateway for bacterial infections that can be catastrophic.

Drilling and filling has had little impact in controlling the national caries rate and misses the point as a long-term prevention solution. The specific bacteria that cause caries is infectious in nature and can be spread from parent or caregiver to child or even from child to child.

CAMBRA is a simple assessment tool that categorizes risk as low, moderate, high, or extremely high and suggests the most effective treatment protocol. CAMBRA is driven by evidence gathered through assessment and does not rely on costly devices or complex procedures.

As a result, CAMBRA can be used with an extensive patient demographic. And, in underserved populations where caries rates are exploding, the promise of cost-efficient prevention is particularly attractive.

Powerful simplicity

The practitioner's assessment and clinical experience lie at the heart of the evidence-based CAMBRA approach. A standard assessment form is used to record data gathered by the dental

team about a patient's current risk level for caries development. The information is collected through visual observation in the clinic and a series of questions answered by the patient.

Diagnostic radiographs, saliva tests, and bacteria tests may also be used to gather information that rounds out the CAMBRA assessment.

The collected data provides a way to compare pathogenic factors such as bacteria, xerostomia, and dietary habits against protective factors in saliva, the therapeutic effects of sealants, antimicrobials, and fluoride. The clinician uses the information from the CAMBRA assessment to build a plan to prevent or reverse a patient's caries.

The dental hygienist's role

CAMBRA calls for a team approach to educate and inspire patients to improve their at-home oral care habits. The CAMBRA protocol also provides strategies and products that will help patients maintain optimal oral health. Since dental hygienists are oral health educators, they are a key component in educating the patient about CAMBRA.

The dental hygienist is instrumental in determining and implementing the caries management protocol that may include antibacterial agents, fluoride, xylitol, or pH modification.

Ready on arrival

As patients and the dental profession continue to recognize caries as a preventable infectious disease, CAMBRA will grow in importance as a method of prevention.

Dental hygienists can position themselves as leaders in offices where CAMBRA is practiced by pursuing educational opportunities that enhance their understanding of preventive dentistry and build their expertise working under the CAMBRA model.

See for yourself

Start learning now about how CAMBRA is used to provide lifelong caries risk management to dental patients. [Click here to access a CAMBRA assessment worksheet.](#)

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