



IFDH Oral-Systemic Link Knowledge and Practices Survey

BACKGROUND

Objective: To better understand global dental hygienists' knowledge and practices regarding the relationship between oral health and overall health (i.e., oral-systemic link). This was the 4th in a series of surveys to help identify opportunities for future educational programs.

Survey flow: The survey was sent to 34 national associations.

RESPONDENTS

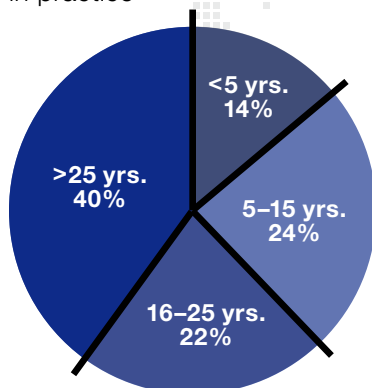
706 respondents from 23 countries

Top countries

- United Kingdom 40%
- Canada 14%
- South Africa 7%
- Finland 7%
- Korea 5%
- Portugal 4%
- Israel 4%
- United States 3%
- Norway 3%

Years of experience

Skewed towards more years in practice

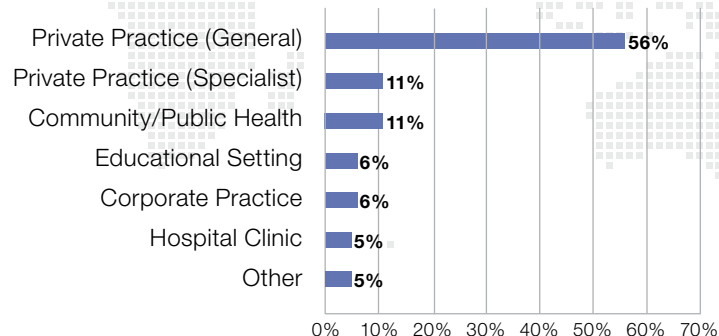


Countries with ≤2%:

Ireland, Belgium, Australia, Sweden, Malta, Singapore, Latvia, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates

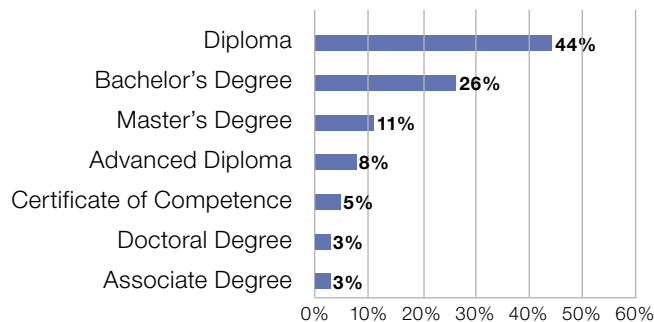
Work setting

Majority in private practice, general dentistry



Education

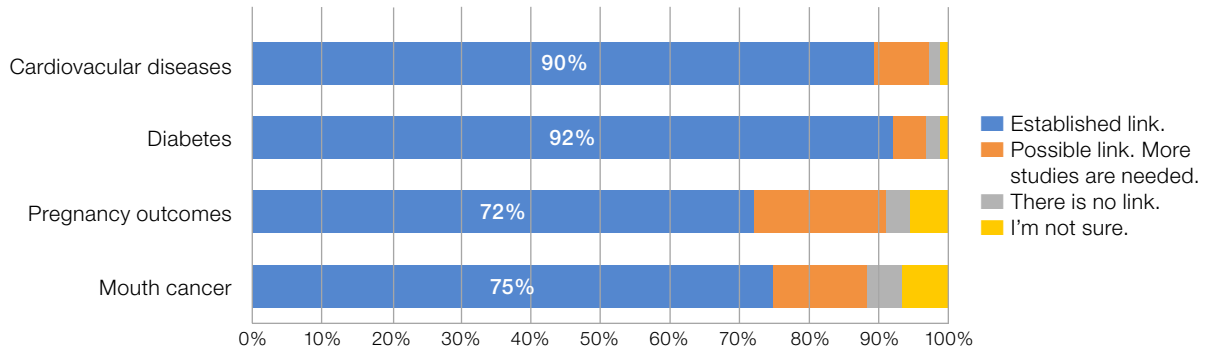
70% have a Diploma or Bachelor's Degree



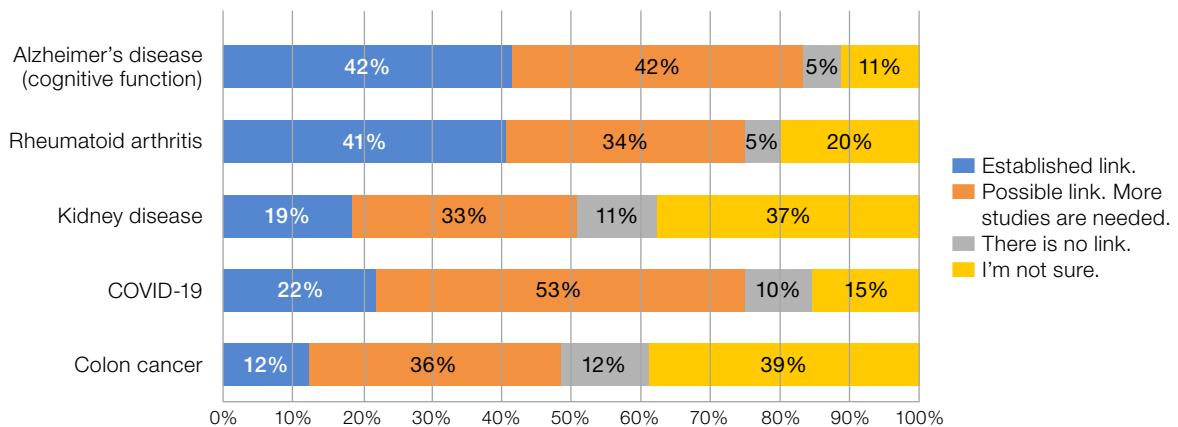
Are you aware of a link between oral health and the conditions below?

(check all that apply)

Majority of respondents report an established link with oral health and:



Less than half of respondents report an established link with oral health and:



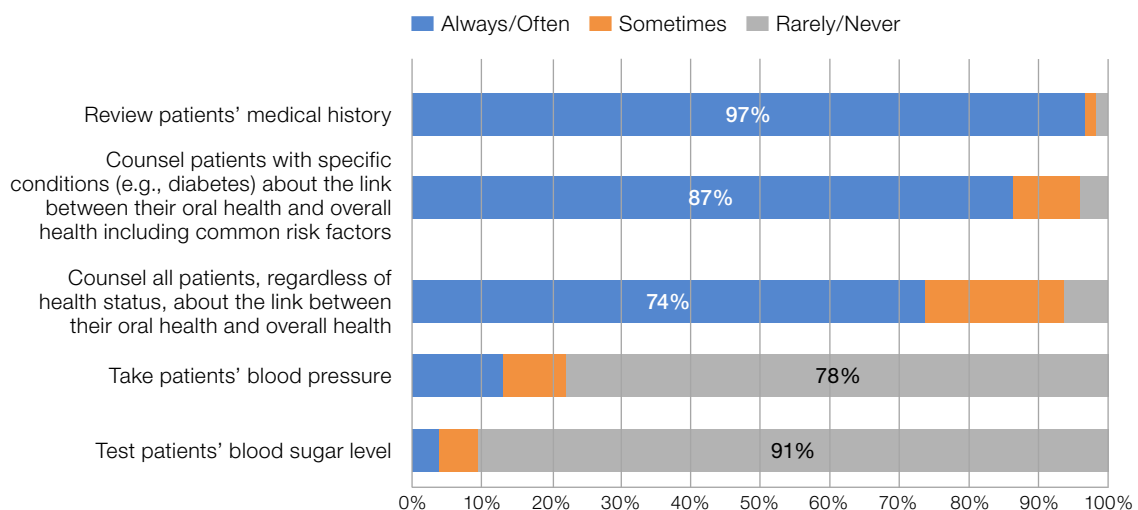
How often do you perform the following activities as part of routine appointments? (check all that apply)

Common practices during routine appointments:

- Review medical history
- Counsel patients about link between oral health and overall health

Uncommon practices:

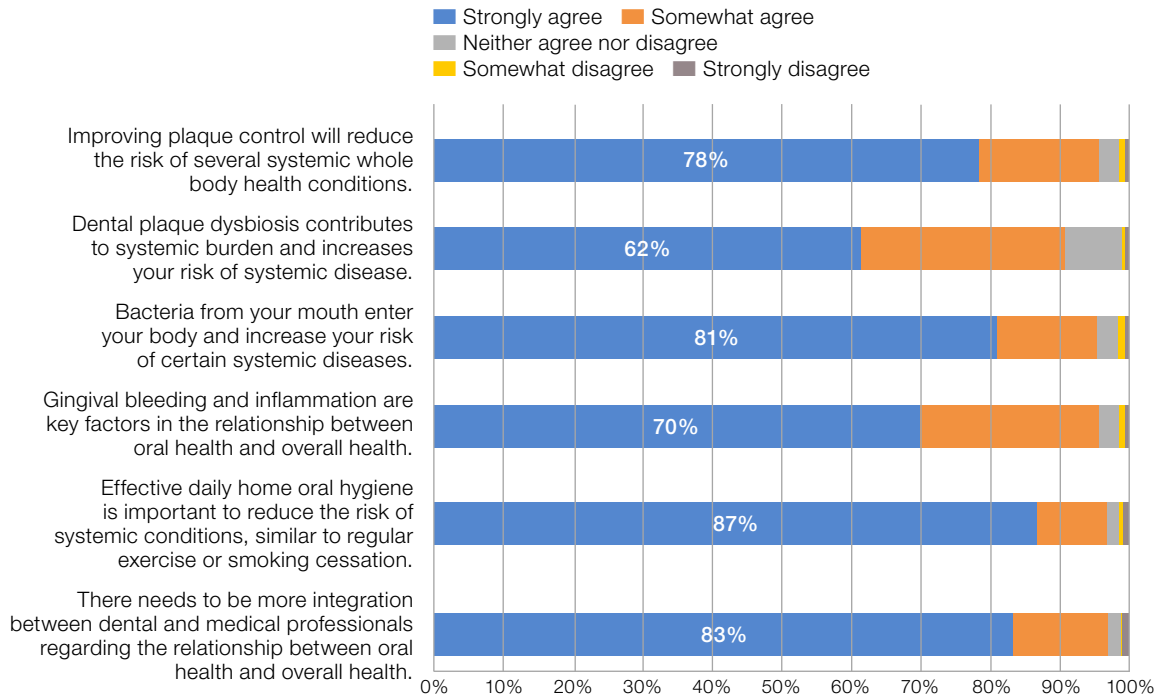
- Take blood pressure
- Test blood sugar level



Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each statement below.

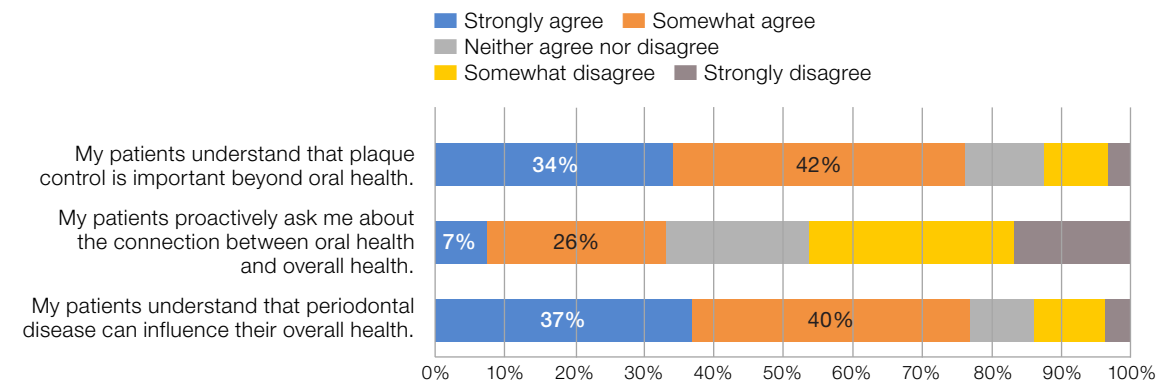
Respondents strongly agree that:

- Relationship exists between dental plaque, bacteria, gingival bleeding/inflammation, and overall health
- Improved plaque control will reduce risk of systemic conditions
- There is a need for more medical-dental interprofessional integration



Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each statement below.

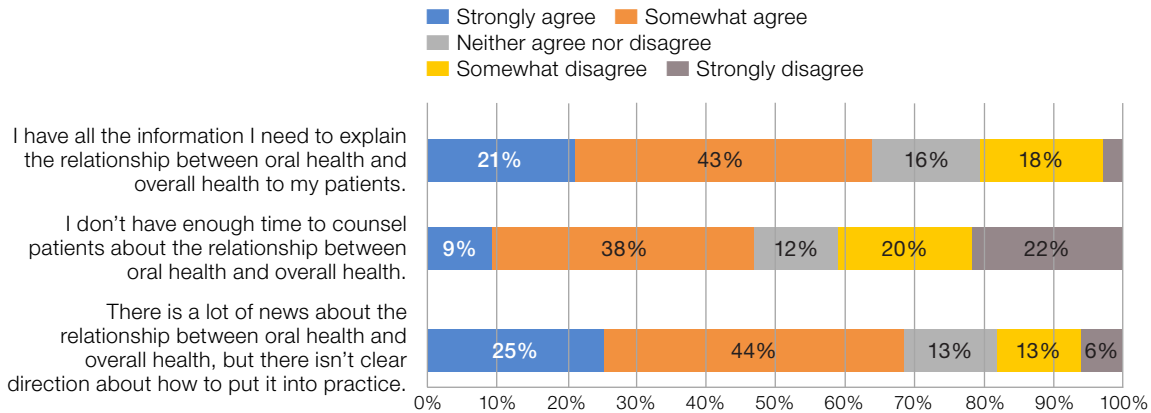
Most respondents strongly or somewhat agree that patients understand there's a link between plaque/periodontal disease and overall health. However, most patients are not proactively asking about it.



Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each statement below.

There are opportunities to:

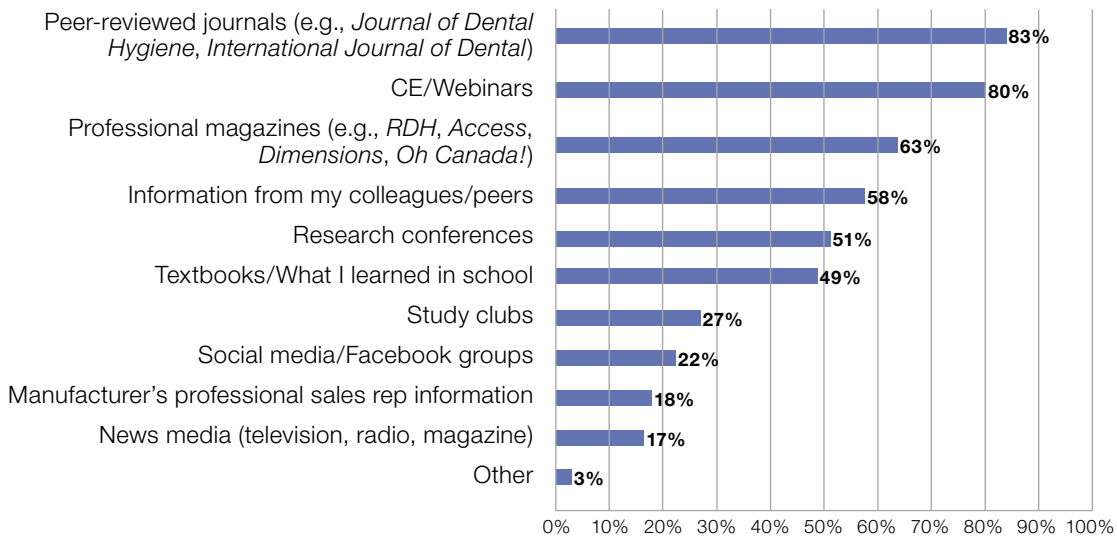
- Provide dental hygienists with more information on the oral-systemic link to educate patients
- Increase time dental hygienists have to counsel patients about it
- Provide more direction about how to put oral-systemic link news into practice



Which sources, if any, do you rely on for information about the relationship between oral health and overall health? (check all that apply)

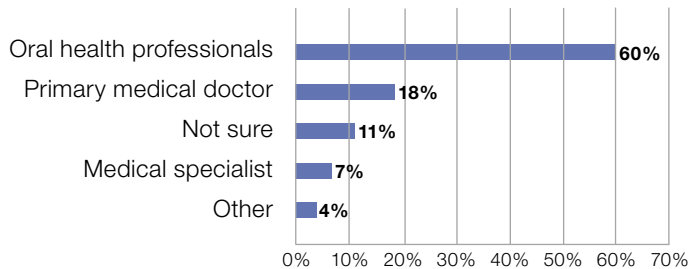
Top resources for information about oral-systemic link:

- Peer-reviewed journals – 83%
- CE courses and webinars – 80%
- Professional magazines – 63%
- Colleagues – 58%



Whom do you think patients consider as their PRIMARY source of information regarding the relationship between oral health and overall health?

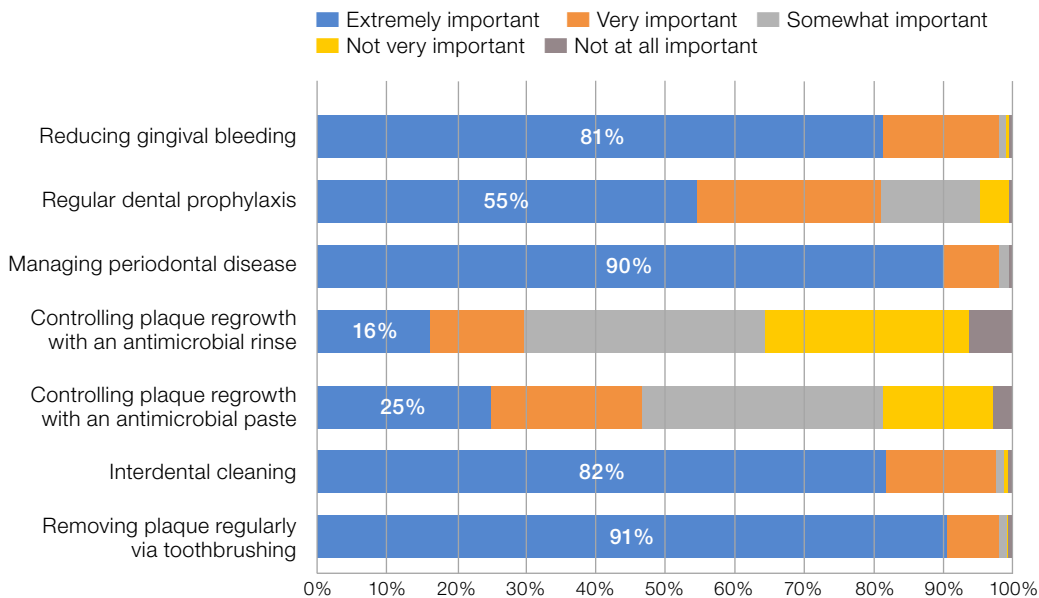
60% of respondents said patients view Oral Health Professionals as primary source for oral-systemic link information.



How important are each of the following oral health practices to reduce a patient's risk for systemic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes)?

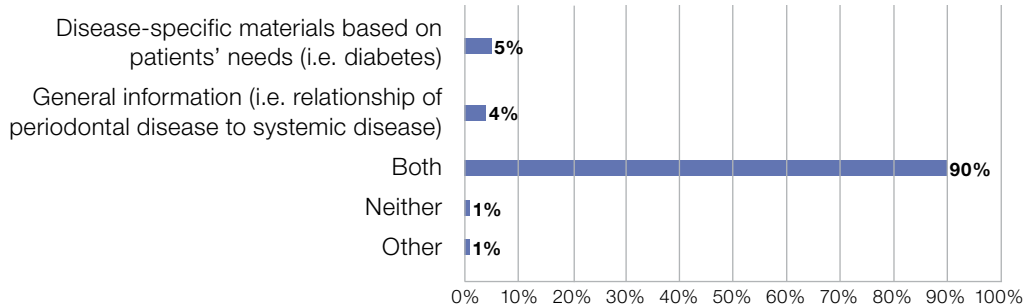
Oral health practices receiving highest "extremely important" rating for reducing risk for systemic diseases:

- Remove plaque regularly via toothbrushing – 91%
- Managing periodontal disease – 90%
- Interdental cleaning – 82%
- Reducing gingival bleeding – 81%



What information is most important to you?

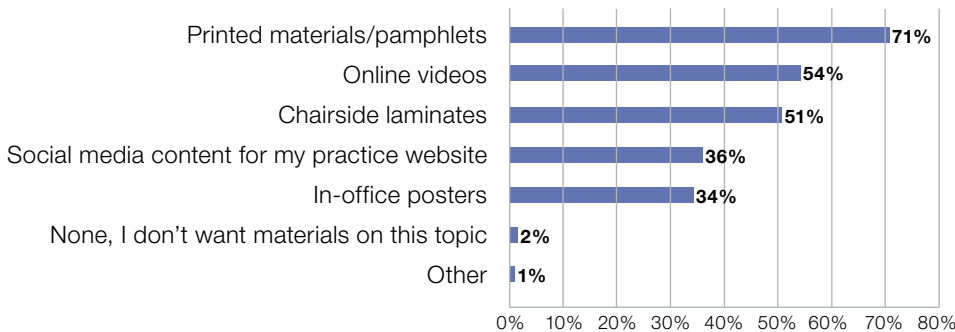
Dental hygienists want general and disease-specific information about oral-systemic link.



In what format would you prefer to receive patient education materials on the relationship between oral health and overall health? (check all that apply)

Most desired format for information on oral-systemic link:

- Printable material/pamphlets – 71%
- Online videos – 54%
- Chairside laminates – 51%



Other IFDH Survey Results

Click the links below to learn more about other IFDH surveys:

[2021 Electric toothbrush survey](#)

[2020 Covid Survey](#)

[2019 Toothpaste Survey](#)