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You can scarcely have missed the plethora of media reports in recent months that speak of the links between periodontal disease and heart disease. Some of the more irresponsible of these reports scream headlines as dramatic as “Floss or Die!” Partially in response to such hyperbole, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) organized a very interesting workshop that I attended in early February.

The purpose of the workshop was to provide an update on the science behind the linkage of periodontal diseases and systemic health. It also explored how the dental profession could best disseminate responsible information about this linkage to a range of stakeholders.

The take-away messages from the workshop were finely nuanced, not lending themselves to newspaper headlines. There does seem to be a strong 2-way correlation between periodontal diseases and diabetes. A diabetic, especially one with poor glycemic control, appears to be particularly at risk of developing periodontal diseases. Similarly, periodontal diseases appear to exacerbate diabetes.

No cause and effect relationship has been established between periodontal diseases and cardiac conditions, even though there appears to be a strong theoretical basis for a link between the 2 disease processes. Similarly, periodontal diseases appear to exacerbate diabetes.

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