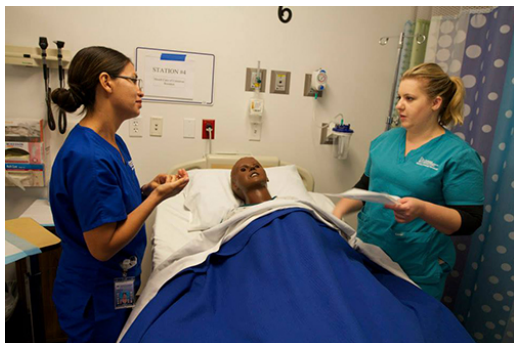


MCC Dental Hygiene Students Make Their Rounds at Barrow Neurologic Institute

Bulletin of Dental Education

MCC Dental Hygiene Students Make Their Rounds at Barrow Neurologic Institute

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The pral-systemic connection and interprofessional collaborations are among some of dental education’s key focus areas. **Mesa Community College’s (MCC) Dental Hygiene program** is addressing both with an exciting new educational experience. Beginning this month, MCC’s dental hygiene students are rotating on the hospital floors of Dignity Health’s Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, AZ.

The impetus for this experience is the result of the **research** and vision of Virginia Prendergast, Ph.D., NP, director of Advanced Practice Nursing and Evidence-based Research. She has spent years researching the connection between hospitalizations, their

negative impact on oral health and the subsequent increase in nosocomial infections, namely VAP (Ventilator Associated Pneumonia) as a result of increased pathogenic oral bacteria.



Mesa Community College
Dental Hygiene program
Mesa, AZ

Program Director: Debbie Hoxea, R.D.H., MAEd
Year opened: 2005
Degree offered: A.A.S.
Total program enrollment: 33

the connection between good oral health and decreased negative sequela of extended hospital stays.

Dr. Prendergast and her research colleagues have developed the Bedside Oral Exam (BOE), a tool to determine patient oral health risk. Items assessed on the BOE include observation of swallow function, lips, tongue, saliva, mucous membranes, gingiva, teeth or dentures and odor. The findings gathered during the BOE inform the Barrow Oral Care Protocols (BOCP). BOCPs include brushing with an electric toothbrush, lubricating oral mucosa, moisturizing the lips and swabbing with chlorhexidine gluconate if there is severe dysfunction.

Students work in pairs under the supervision of hospital staff and faculty, shadowing a nurse or dental hygienist and providing BOEs and BOCPs bedside. Data will be collected from the students’ efforts to further the research effort by illustrating

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Future plans for this collaboration include dental hygiene students educating other health care professionals on the effects pathogenic oral bacteria have on systemic health and the benefits of preventive oral care.

Dr. Prendergast maintains a positive outlook on the new program. "I believe there is a role for dental hygienists in the hospital. I imagine a day when oral health care becomes part of the hospital Standard of Care."

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