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From the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Dental Hygiene

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How many of you have received questions from your patients and other health care providers about the importance and safety of treating pregnant patients? We are so pleased to be able to bring you this timely CE supplement on a topic that is of interest to every practicing dental hygienist. Estimates are that over 50% of pregnant women have some form of gingival disease either from gingivitis or periodontitis. Infections in the mother have been identified as increasing the risk for pregnancy complications such as preterm birth and preeclampsia. In addition, pregnancy complications substantially increase the burden to the public by escalating health care costs (estimated at billions of dollars per year), not to mention the emotional trauma to families who experience an adverse pregnancy outcome.

This supplement will update every dental hygienist on the latest evidence about the impact of periodontal disease on pregnancy and includes the most recent treatment recommendations for pregnant patients. The paper thoroughly reviews the literature on the topic as well as explains the study designs of the many investigations conducted over the years. A quick reference guide to relevant studies is included as well as information about which dental procedures are deemed safe during pregnancy. The authors have also provided you with published practice guidelines for care and web sites for easy reference.

Another important feature of this supplement is the collaboration between dental hygiene and medicine in the writing of this piece. Heather Jared, BSDH, MS, is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, where she received both her BS degree and MS degree in Dental Hygiene. While in graduate school, Heather conducted her thesis project on the topic of adverse pregnancy outcomes and it grew into a full-time job as a research associate professor at UNC. Heather is now part of the Center of Oral and Systemic Diseases, with the primary responsibility of planning and conducting clinical trials. Kim Boggess, MD, an obstetrician, is an associate professor in the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina and part of an interdisciplinary research team investigating the effect of periodontal disease on adverse pregnancy outcomes. Collaboration with other health care professionals is vital to the improvement of health for our patients and for moving our profession forward in the future.

Finally, I want to extend sincere appreciation to Philips Sonicare for their support of this supplement and their dedication to the improvement of oral health throughout the world.