

## From the Editor

# The Aseptic Chain

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## *Editorial*

### **The Aseptic Chain**

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This issue of the *International Journal of Orofacial Myology* contains two articles concerning transmission of disease between patients and providers of oral health care. Dental health professionals are steeped in the mystery of this invisible world of microorganisms and the aseptic chain which prevents cross-contamination between patient and operator or between patients. With all the recent publicity in the media regarding AIDS, Herpes, and Hepatitis (the big three) it is no wonder that many dental hygienists are greeting their patients these days looking as though they worked in the isolation ward of General Hospital.

There is no doubt that dentists and dental hygienists are at high risk for transmittable diseases. Both the blood and the saliva contacted in the oral cavity are capable of carrying organisms not found in the normally high concentration of microscopic oral flora. The continuous emphasis on asepsis in the curriculum of dental care providers serves a valuable purpose and ingrains such techniques as hand-washing into the student until it becomes a routine behavior.

Many orofacial myologists come from disciplines

other than dentistry and have not received this form of training. Furthermore, the majority of therapists will insist that even hand-washing between patients is unnecessary because "they never put their hands in the patient's mouth." The purpose of this editorial and of the two articles in this issue of the Journal, is to raise your consciousness as to how much contact you have with your patient both on the external head and neck area and inside the oral cavity. Other areas to investigate would be: What kinds of instruments do you use for intraoral vision or retraction? What measurement or exercise devices are you using for patients or multiple patients? What kinds of drinking cups, squirt bottles, eye droppers, etc. are you using as therapy tools? Spend a couple of working days checking your routine with the possibility of disease transmission as the focus of your attention. Critically appraise your working environment and the efficacy of any sterilization, disinfectant, or sanitization techniques which you are currently using. Keep the aseptic chain in mind and remember that its purpose is not to keep you in bondage but to serve as a barrier to the transmission of disease.