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**NEW STUDY FINDS A POSITIVE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN
PERIODONTAL DISEASE AND CORONARY HEART DISEASE**

Periodontal disease and coronary heart disease are widespread conditions; therefore, an association between the two is an important scientific subject from a preventive outlook

CHICAGO – Researchers found an increased risk of coronary heart disease for people below the age of 60 who have more than four millimeters of alveolar bone loss (the bone that holds the teeth in the mouth) from periodontal disease, according to a new study that is printed in the *Journal of Periodontology*.

It was found that participants with coronary heart disease had an increase of periodontal disease indicators, including alveolar bone loss, clinical attachment loss and bleeding compared to the group without coronary heart disease.

“This study is distinctive because to our knowledge, it is the first to include both the alveolar bone loss and full mouth recording of clinical attachment loss as measurements of periodontal disease,” explains Dr. Karen Geismar, Department of Periodontology, School of Dentistry, Faculty of Health Science, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. “Alveolar bone loss was recently found to be the periodontal variable that had the strongest association to coronary heart disease.”

The association between periodontal disease and coronary heart disease has been that chronic infections and the inflammatory response from diseases such as periodontal disease may be involved in the initiation and progression of atherosclerosis.

“A number of pathways are suspected to be involved,” said Geismar. “One way is that periodontal bacteria directly invade the arterial wall and another way is that bacterial products from the periodontal pocket exert a systemic effect on atherosclerosis development based on the immune system.”

“This is one of many studies suggesting that the spread of bacteria and bacterial products from the periodontal lesion to the bloodstream may contribute to coronary heart disease,” said Preston D. Miller, DDS and AAP President. “However, it is still uncertain whether or not the association between periodontal disease and coronary heart disease is causal. Until we know more, it is very important that people talk to their dentist or periodontist about their periodontal health.”

STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This study included 110 patients with coronary heart disease and 140 people without coronary heart disease. The mean age was 65 years and 70 percent of the participants were male. All 250 participants received a medical and dental examination. Researchers found a significantly higher odds ratio of 6.6 for individuals below age 60 having being a patient with coronary heart disease when having a mean alveolar bone loss of more than four millimeters.

For more information including a referral to a periodontist or a free brochure entitled *Ask Your Periodontist About Periodontal Disease and Heart Disease*, visit the AAP website at www.perio.org or call toll-free at 800/FLOSS-EM (800.356-7736).

The American Academy of Periodontology is an 8,000-member association of dental professionals specializing in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting the gums and supporting structures of the teeth and in the placement and maintenance of dental implants. Periodontics is one of nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A copy of the *JOP* article "*Periodontal Disease and Coronary Heart Disease – A Case-Control Study*" is available to the media by contacting the AAP Public Affairs Department at 312/573-3243. The public and/or non-AAP members can view a study abstract online, and the full-text of the study may be accessed online for \$20.00 at <http://www.joponline.org/>.