

Proposed Resolution to Support Universal Access or Oral Healthcare for Pregnant Women in Arizona

Background and Summary

Oral health is an important component of general health and should be maintained during pregnancy and through a woman's lifespan. Good oral health may have a positive effect on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other disorders. Perinatal and infant oral health is key in order to achieve a lifetime free from preventable oral disease.

Physiologic changes during pregnancy can result in oral health changes during pregnancy including gingivitis, benign oral gingival lesions, tooth mobility, tooth erosion, dental caries, and periodontitis. Approximately 40% of pregnant women have some form of periodontal disease.

Scientific research indicates periodontal disease may raise the risk of pre-term birth, low birth-weight and preeclampsia. Further, dental caries are an infectious disease which can be transmitted from a mother to her baby after its birth- increasing the risk for early childhood caries. Pregnancy is a unique time when medical and dental professionals can treat a woman's oral disease while she is working to make healthy choices for her baby. This treatment may reduce the likelihood that her baby is exposed to bacteria which may cause early childhood caries.

Access to dental care is directly related to income level and the poorest women are least likely to receive oral health care. In Arizona, low income pregnant women enrolled in the state's Medicaid program do not have access to the kinds of the preventative and therapeutic care critical to maintaining good oral health for the mother and infant.

Proposed Resolution September 2016

Whereas, the Arizona Public Health Association recognizes that oral health is an important component of general health and should be maintained during pregnancy and through a woman's lifespan; and

Whereas, good oral health may have a positive effect on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other disorders and perinatal and infant oral health is key in order to achieve a lifetime free from preventable oral disease; and

Whereas, physiologic changes during pregnancy can result in oral health changes during pregnancy including gingivitis, benign oral gingival lesions, tooth mobility, tooth erosion, dental caries, and periodontitis; and

Whereas, access to dental care is directly related to income level and the poorest women are least likely to receive oral health care.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Arizona Public Health Association supports universal oral healthcare coverage of women before, during, and after pregnancy in order to optimize their general and oral health of the mother and infant.