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In the age of COVID-19,
Dr. Hanh Bui Keating
of **Bryn Mawr Periodontal
Associates** suggests routine
periodontal care may not
only save teeth but also
help protect lives.

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by **Jenny Graham**
photography by
Jody Robinson

MAIN LINE BOARD-CERTIFIED PERIODONTIST **HANH BUI KEATING, D.M.D.**, has long championed routine periodontal care as a way to maintain overall health and wellness. Despite the efforts of the dental community, periodontal disease has reached epidemic proportions in the United States.

Approximately 50 percent of Americans over the age of 30, as well as 70 percent of Americans ages 70 and older, have some form of gum disease, according to estimates from the American Dental Association and American Academy of Periodontology (AAP). Most of these cases go undiagnosed or untreated.

Dr. Keating says the stakes have never been higher. She cites a recent AAP article, which found a startling link between periodontitis—the most severe form of gum disease—and poorer outcomes among patients with COVID-19. Of the nearly 570 patients studied, those with periodontitis were at least three times more likely to experience COVID-19 complications such as death, admission to the intensive care unit, and the need for assisted ventilation. Additionally, the study revealed that COVID-19 patients with periodontitis showed “increased levels of biomarkers associated with worsened disease outcomes.”

“It’s more important than ever to be aware of your overall dental health, specifically your periodontal status,” says Dr. Keating of Bryn Mawr Periodontal Associates. “I have met many patients who had no idea they have been living with this silent condition for so long. By the time they would come to me, either because their teeth feel loose or painful, they had bad breath, their gums are bleeding, or they could visibly see their gums receding, their gum disease is usually in the more advanced stage.”

Dr. Keating says these patients come from all walks of life, from stay-at-home caregivers to scientists to CEOs. Many either regret not knowing about their condition sooner or wish they were more informed about less invasive options to treat their condition because the traditional “cut and sew” option sounds frightening to them. Dr. Keating takes a “holistic approach to fighting periodontal disease,” meaning her practice offers multiple treatment options and believes strongly in patient education.

“Periodontal disease is a lifelong condition,” she adds. “The treatments we offer will provide pain relief and help slow progress of the disease. That’s why we believe it’s so important to educate the patient and help them manage the disease. In the same way that a



An Ounce of Prevention

In the age of COVID-19, **Dr. Hanh Bui Keating** of Bryn Mawr Periodontal Associates suggests routine periodontal care may not only save teeth but also help protect lives.

doctor wouldn’t just send a diabetic home with medication and not coach them on making lifestyle changes, we believe in providing a realistic approach to managing periodontal disease. We are here to help. Treating periodontal disease is what we are the best at doing, and we do it with love and care.”

For example, she added the “No Cut, No Sew, No Fear” minimally invasive LANAP® procedure to her repertoire in 2013. Featuring the PerioLase MVP-7® Dental Laser, which is FDA approved to treat gum disease, this treatment offers an alternative to more invasive surgery. She is quick to note, however, that some patients are not a good fit for a laser procedure. For these cases, she would perform the procedure using a more traditional approach.

“With such a large portion of the population suffering from gum disease, we find

that today’s patients want options,” she adds. “They don’t want to be told there’s only one way to do things. If the patient is a candidate for laser surgery, we’re proud to be able to offer them that option.”

With COVID-19 infections running rampant throughout the United States, Dr. Keating suggests maintaining proper oral hygiene remains as important than ever. She and her colleagues at Bryn Mawr Periodontal Associates have created a safe and comfortable environment designed to reassure patients. For example, the office boasts a HEPA air-filtration system and UV lights for enhanced sterilization.

“The risk of doing nothing far outweighs the risk of coming in for treatment,” she says. “There are already inflammatory cytokines in the patient’s body in response to the periodontal disease. Adding inflammation from COVID, per se, and the scale tips towards a poorer outcome.” ■



Bryn Mawr Periodontal Associates

1201 County Line Road, Suite 201 | Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 | (610) 525-8485 | brynmawrperio.com