



**Oral cancer** Are you aware of the signs, symptoms and risks?



**Oral health for total health** The importance of regular check-ups

**MEDIA PLANET**

November 2012

# ORAL HEALTH



## SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

“Dancing With The Stars” co-host **Brooke Burke Charvet** teams up with **Operation Smile** to better the lives of children all over the world

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## CHALLENGES

1

WHEN BRUSHING  
AVOID VIGOROUS OR  
HARSH SCRUBBING  
AS IT CAN IRRITATE  
THE GUMS



WE RECOMMEND



A smile changes everything :  
Antônia Sâmia  
Menezes Sales  
amazing transfor-  
mation

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**MEDIA  
PLANET**

ORAL HEALTH  
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It is estimated that **2.26 million** school-days and **4.15 million** working-days are lost annually due to dental visits and sick-days. Acknowledging the growing body of research that links **oral health to overall health** is essential. Everyone, young or old, should understand the significance of good oral hygiene.

## Oral health – A window to your overall health

For years many have looked at oral health as separate and distinct from general health, however, the two can no longer be separated. They are definitely connected.

### The big picture

The impact of your oral health cannot be underestimated. The mouth is the gateway for total body health. Poor oral health can be linked to diseases such as diabetes, some respiratory disorders and heart disease. The mouth contains an abundance of bacteria and without appropriate oral hygiene habits, many of the "bad" bacteria can lead to inflammation of gum tissue and the formation of calculus (tartar) which adheres tightly to tooth surfaces. These bacteria can enter the body through the blood stream or saliva and interfere with your body's ability

to fight off infection elsewhere.

### What you can do

The key to managing oral health starts with careful attention to home care. Brushing and flossing daily removes plaque that infects the gums and causes cavities. The second thing that is critical for good oral health is regular checkups. Dental professionals assess the mouth for cavities, gum disease and



**Shirley Smith**  
President, College  
of Registered  
Dental Hygienists of  
Alberta

early detection of oral cancer. Finally, regular removal of plaque and tartar build up, by a dental professional is essential. Following these simple steps will help minimize the risk of inflammation and oral disease.

Technology has improved over the years. There are devices like ultrasonic scalers that assist with oral cancer screening and make the cleaning of teeth more efficient. Some offices now utilize practices such as massage and use of headphones to screen out noises, which encourages relaxation during your visit.

### No matter what age

Good oral health is important at any age. Young children should have their first dental visit within six months of the eruption of their first tooth or by their first birthday. This not only helps children become familiar with the dental office, but also enables dental professionals to educate children and their parents on the importance of taking care of their teeth. It also allows the oral health care provider to screen for other potential problems that may develop over time. Youth



**Sandy Lawlor**  
President, Canadian  
Dental Hygienists  
Association

and teenagers often need reminders to limit sugary pop and sports drinks that lead to unwanted decay. Adults need to be assessed for gum disease. Seniors, particularly those on multiple medications, should be monitored for conditions such as "dry mouth" which influence their susceptibility to development of root decay.

Remember, your total health begins with your oral health and practicing good oral hygiene, in partnership with your dental professional, will have you smiling all the way to a healthier you.

SANDY LAWLOR,  
SHIRLEY SMITH

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## Get checked! Your best defence to fight oral cancer

**In 2003, an estimated 3,100 Canadians were newly diagnosed with oral cancer. That same year, 1,090 people died of the disease. In the U.S., oral cancer kills roughly one person per hour, 24 hours a day. Of those newly diagnosed, only half will survive five years later, and this terrifying death rate has not declined for decades.**

These statistics are frightening, but the good news is that early detection plays a major role in preventing or curing oral cancers. The first line of defence is the dentist. They are specifically trained to recognize even subtle changes in the mouth and take action.

### Signs and symptoms

Pre-malignant lesions usually manifest as white patches (leukoplakias) that can look like small calluses. They could be benign and nothing,

but skin thickened by trauma or normal wear and tear of oral tissues. Of greater concern are spots that become ulcers, bleed, rapidly change appearance or that are obviously getting larger.

Once in the chair, patients will find that dentists do not take chances, especially when the spots appear in areas where normal trauma is unlikely, such as the soft palate of the mouth or under the tongue. When such spots are seen, and particularly when there is no known cause, the dentist will strongly recommend follow up and refer the patient to an oral pathologist or an oral and maxillofacial surgeon for consultation and possible removal and biopsy. If the dentist believes that the lesion is likely not cancerous but still a possible concern, they may choose to closely monitor the area.

"The best thing is to remove all suspicious lesions," says Dr. Seema Ganatra, an oral pathologist who teaches at the University of Alberta.

"Oral cancer has a similar progression to many other cancers such as cervical cancer. When dysplasia (abnormal cells) is seen, these cells may evolve into cancer cells if they are not removed. It is impossible to predict which lesions will go on to become cancer. Followup screening and patient education complete the cycle."



**Dr. Jonathan Skuba**  
Past President,  
Alberta Dental  
Association and  
College

Regular dental checkups are essential to protect your health, since early detection can save lives. Reducing risk factors is another way to promote good health, Ganatra says.

"Not surprisingly, people who smoke are at high risk for oral cancer, but so are those who consume large amounts of alcohol. People who are both heavy smokers and

drinkers have 18 times the risk of developing oral cancer." Smokeless tobacco, cigars and pipe smoking are every bit as dangerous as cigarettes, she adds. And those with these increased risk factors who don't regularly see a dentist face even greater peril.

### Types of detection

Dentists have a number of screening tools such as rinses and fluorescent lights to help them spot signs of oral cancer, but visual diagnosis and biopsy remain the best detection methods, Ganatra says. "It is in the pathology lab that we have a better chance of making the diagnosis."

"Screening is vital," says Ganatra. "Two-thirds of oral cancers are found in the late stages; if we had caught them early, those people might still be alive."

DR JONATHAN SKUBA  
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INSIGHT



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**BRUSH YOUR TONGUE AS WELL AS YOUR TEETH TO HELP ELIMINATE MOUTH-BORN BACTERIA**

# No matter what your age, regular dental appointments are crucial

**M**ost people shudder at the thought of going to the dentist but regular check ups and oral health are closely-linked to your overall health and well being.

"The mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body," says Ann Wright, director of Dental Hygiene Practice at the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association. "The germs, bacteria and infections that can develop in the mouth can travel through the blood stream and affect other parts of the body." That's why many dentists and dental hygienists call on patients to get regular check ups.

**The root of the problem**

As Wright points out, oral disease is often not painful in the early stages. "A toothache generally means the problem has progressed to a point where the tooth has to be treated with a filling, root canal or extraction," adds Wright. "Routine preventive examinations can detect the early signs of problems and appropriate treatment can avert these drastic measures."

Oral cancer is also another detectable disease that if left unchecked can have serious repercussions. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, in 2011 alone there were 4,300 new cases of oral cancer reported and 3,100 deaths from the disease.

"Diabetes is another disease that shows specific oral manifestations

such as a higher bleeding tendency and delayed healing," adds Wright.

Research has also identified periodontal (gum) disease as a risk factor for heart and lung disease, diabetes, premature, low birth weight babies and a number of other conditions.

There are also some emerging concerns according to Euan Swan, Manager of Dental Programs for the Canadian Dental Association, including root caries - cavities. "Seniors are keeping their teeth longer - which is good," says Swan. "But (they) are at greater risk of tooth decay."

He also says he's noticed more cavities in young people. "Dental erosion due to an increase in consumption of acidic drinks such as soda drinks, energy drinks and sweetened juices es-

pecially among the youth is a concern," says Swan.

**Prevent and treat**

A lot of these health concerns are treatable; you just need to go to the dentist. And, treatment is generally less costly and less invasive if problems are detected early, adds Wright.

How often you go, that's up to your dentist. Some patients may need to visit several times a year, while others should visit every six months.

"Some people may be able to go a year without an oral exam and others may require closer monitoring," says Wright. During the visit - the dentist or dental hygienist will examine the teeth and jawbone as well as the gums and inside the mouth. They may take

a few x-rays to get a closer look. "The oral cavity can even show signs of abuse, eating disorders and the effects of tobacco use," says Wright.

Children should also be assessed as early as their first birthday, that way the oral health provider can check in on developmental problems of the teeth and jaw as well as more typical problems with thumb sucking and baby bottle caries.

"Dental hygienists use this opportunity to educate parents on proper oral care for their children as well as helping the family establish an effective oral care routine at home," says Wright. "Oral disease is 100 percent preventable."

ANDREW SEALE  
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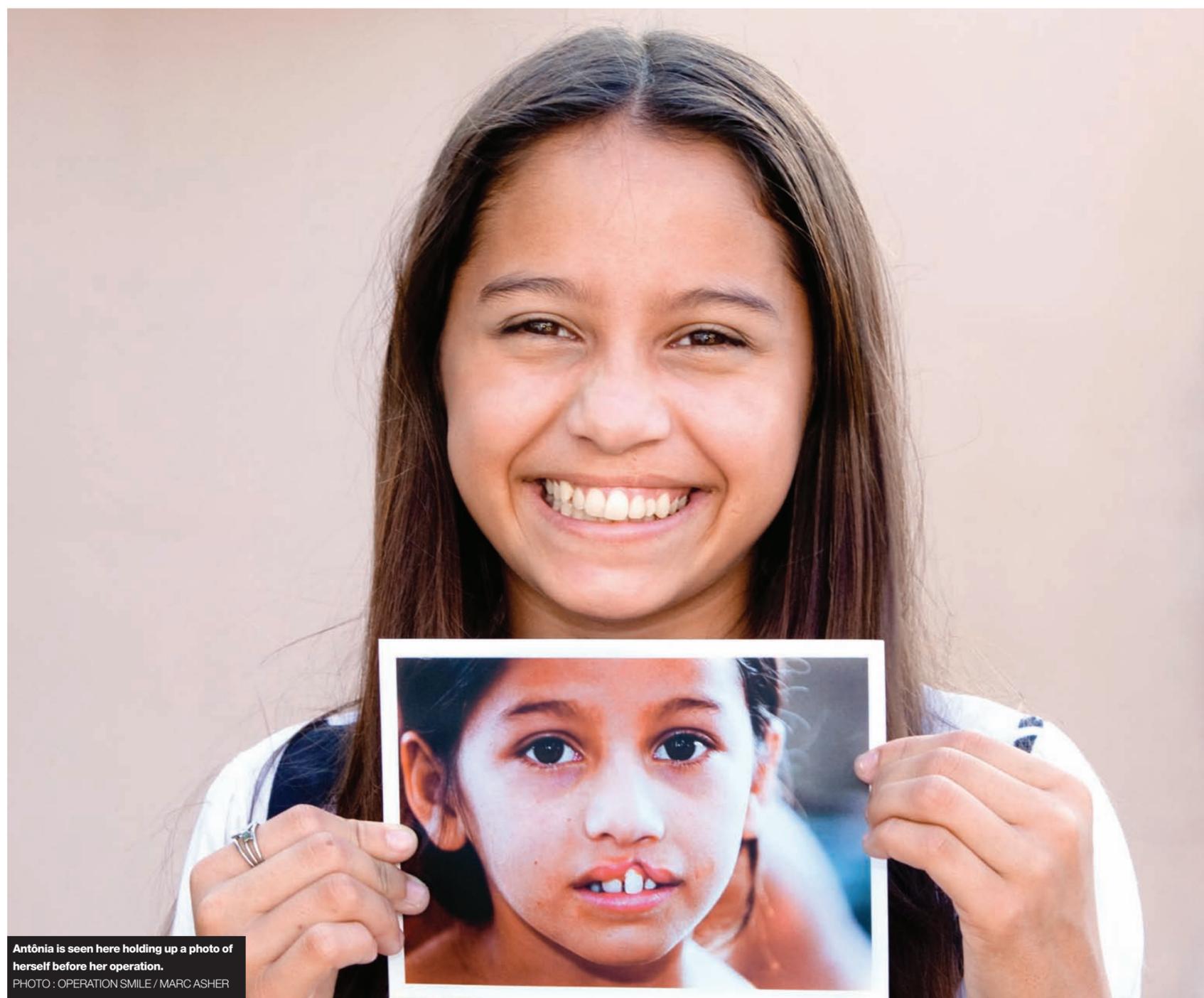
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## INSPIRATION



Antônia is seen here holding up a photo of herself before her operation.  
PHOTO: OPERATION SMILE / MARC ASHER

# A smile changes everything

**A**ntônia Sâmia Menezes Sales is a 12-year-old girl who lives in an isolated village in northern Brazil. Antônia was born with a cleft lip - a facial deformity that can be corrected by a surgery that takes as little as 45 minutes. But the cost of such a surgery was far out of reach for her impoverished parents.

Antônia learned to live with the

pain of rejection. She is a sweet, bright girl but few children were willing to get close enough to find that out. Then great news came from a relative in the city of Fortaleza. Operation Smile was coming to conduct a surgical mission.

"It all started when my aunt told me about a commercial she had seen on TV; then I got very excited because I knew that, from that time on, my life would change," Antônia said. "I believed in

my destiny."

Antônia and her dad walked 15 miles across rutted dirt trails to reach the main road. From there, it was a 90-minute bus ride to the city.

"It was hard not having my mom come with me, because she was pregnant, but my dad was always with me," Antônia said. "When I was younger, my mom had taken me to the hospital, but it didn't work out. When my dad took me again, it worked out."

When they finally reached Operation Smile's surgical mission site, they discovered that hundreds of children were already waiting for help. Antônia prepared for another rejection. Instead, she was selected for surgery. She was beside herself with joy when she saw her new face for the first time—and hasn't stopped smiling since.

In a letter to Operation Smile, Antônia wrote: "Today, I'm a very happy person because I got ope-

rated. I would like to thank each one of you, with all my heart, because you've made my first dream come true and I hope one day I'll be able to have my second dream come true, which is to have my own house, but I'm already very thankful for having gotten operated. My life has totally changed."

MARC ASHER

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# Brooke Burke Charvet helps brighten the smiles of children worldwide

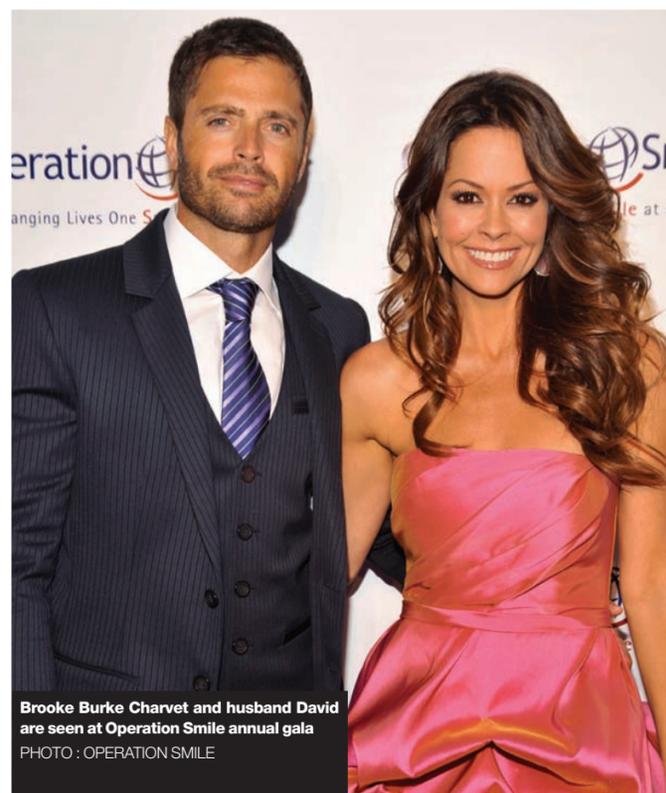
**Brooke Burke Charvet, an Operation Smile ambassador and co-host of television show "Dancing With The Stars", was very upset when she learnt how little it costs to "fix" a child's life and that so many children are still going without the corrective procedure.**

In too many cases, parents can't afford the surgeries that will allow the children to live a normal life.

"As a mother of four children myself, I really understand how important self-esteem is for a young person growing up," she said. "Every child deserves to be happy with who they are. The defect is so easily correctable. If it's only the money issue that is stopping them, then that is something I am determined to do something about, through my role as Smile Ambassador. I speak up at every opportunity! People are usually surprised that it costs so little to fix a child's face. I am intent on spreading the message. It is my way of giving back to society," Brooke says.

## Empowering local communities

Celebrity ambassadors like Brooke are the public face of a very hardworking and super-organized children's charity. Established in 1982, Operation Smile operates in more than 60 countries. Increasingly, their focus is becoming



Brooke Burke Charvet and husband David are seen at Operation Smile annual gala  
PHOTO: OPERATION SMILE

more strategic. "We concentrate on training local professionals. About two-thirds of the surgeries are done by local doctors," says a spokesperson for Operation Smile. Operation Smile helps with the fund raising, donating supplies and equipment.

"We are also advocating that cleft lip and cleft palate be a priority for the local government health systems," says the spokesperson.

Their efforts are bearing fruit.

Already, there is increasing government interest in correcting the defect in their local populations. Although the prevalence rate of cleft lip and palate is about one in 500 in developing countries (it is one in 1,000 in the developed world), in some countries like Vietnam, China and the Philippines, the incidence rate is higher—about one in 300, says Agler. The reasons for this are unclear.

**Hard work on the ground**

## PROFILE

### Operation Smile

■ **What it is:** A worldwide children's charity.

■ **Founded:** In 1982 by Dr. Bill Magee, a craniofacial surgeon, and his wife Kathy, a clinical social worker.

■ **Headquarters:** Norfolk, Virginia.

■ **Mission Statement:** It takes just US\$240 and 45 minutes to change a child's life. Since 1982 over 200,000 free surgeries have been performed for children and young adults born with cleft lips, cleft palates and other facial deformities.

Post-anaesthetic care nurse Donna Crowe of Ottawa, has been on "just under 20" Operation Smile trips. Her first mission was to China in 2001, and she has been hooked ever since. Each trip lasts 12 days. Volunteers typically put in 14-hour days and use the local hospital facilities. "Some hospitals are better than others. Some have no running water, or toilets that flush, but I feel very honoured to help out in this way," Crowe says. "The local people are so grateful for the help. Many come with all their belongings in a plastic

bag, some have no change of clothes apart from what they are wearing. It's humbling." Elizabeth Fudge, a nurse at the Intensive Care Unit of the Sick Kids Hospital, who has been volunteering for Operation Smile trips since 2004, says she was "ecstatic" when she was selected to go on her first mission, to Kenya. She has since been to Guwahati, in India's Assam province several times. People travel long distances, by bus and train, to see her and the other volunteers. "The need in Guwahati is really great. It has been estimated that there are about 34,000 individuals with cleft lip and palate in Assam. We do mega missions here, about 1000 patients each time, but up to 3000 come, hoping to pass the screening. It's painful when people have to be turned away. We always tell them we'll be back," Fudge says. First priority is given to infants and very young children, but Fudge remembers a 60-year-old woman who was operated on. "They still want to be fixed. They still have hope that their lives will be better." Patients are given little "Smile Bags" after the surgery, which contains a toothbrush, toothpaste, toy and a hand mirror. "The kids can't stop looking at themselves in the mirror!" both Crowe and Fudge say.

INDRANI NADARAJAH

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NEWS

3

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DENTAL HYGIENE

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Regulations enacted under Alberta's Health Professions Act allow registered dental hygienists to provide these services in a variety of practice settings in addition to a dental office. This means they can bring their expertise to the homebound, to institutionalized individuals, to First Nations communities and to seniors' lodges.

Dental hygienists must be registered with the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta (CRDHA) in order to practise in Alberta. The CRDHA sets the professional requirements and standards.

They counsel children and adults about effective oral health techniques, food choices, eating habits and the effects of tobacco use - all of which affect the health of teeth and gums.

COLLEGE OF REGISTERED DENTAL HYGIENISTS OF ALBERTA  
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KEN DONOHUE  
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# Straighten up – The latest in orthodontic advancements

Many of us have benefited from the services of an orthodontist. I know myself how transformative it can be, when as a youngster my teeth were straightened with braces. It's amazing seeing the before and after. Dr. Garry Solomon, President-elect of the Canadian Association of Orthodontists, has been practicing orthodontics for almost 40 years and says the type of braces that were used then compared to now is night and day. "The change has been radical," he says. "In the past, we put a band around every tooth. It was painful for the patient, and it took a lot of time to do. Now we apply brackets that bond

to the surface. It's smoother, easier to keep clean and painless."

But other advances are revolutionizing orthodontic treatment. Invisalign clear aligners provide the flexibility to remove the aligners when needed—whether when eating, brushing, or flossing—yet when worn, most people won't even know you are straightening your teeth. The Invisalign system treats the misalignment of teeth using a series of clear removable aligners, says Tim Mack, Senior VP, Marketing and Business Development, Align Technology, Inc. "Teeth are gently moved to the doctor-prescribed final position. Each aligner set (upper and lower) is worn for two weeks and at the end of the second week, you change to the next aligner set in the series."

While many people are having their teeth straightened later in life to look better, more and more are realizing that good oral health contributes to better health overall. "Crooked teeth are more difficult to clean properly," says Solomon "and plaque build-up in the mouth causes irritation, which leads to bleeding. Bacteria can then enter the bloodstream and settle in the heart valves. People are saying they don't want heart problems in their fifties and sixties, and are choosing to have their teeth fixed."

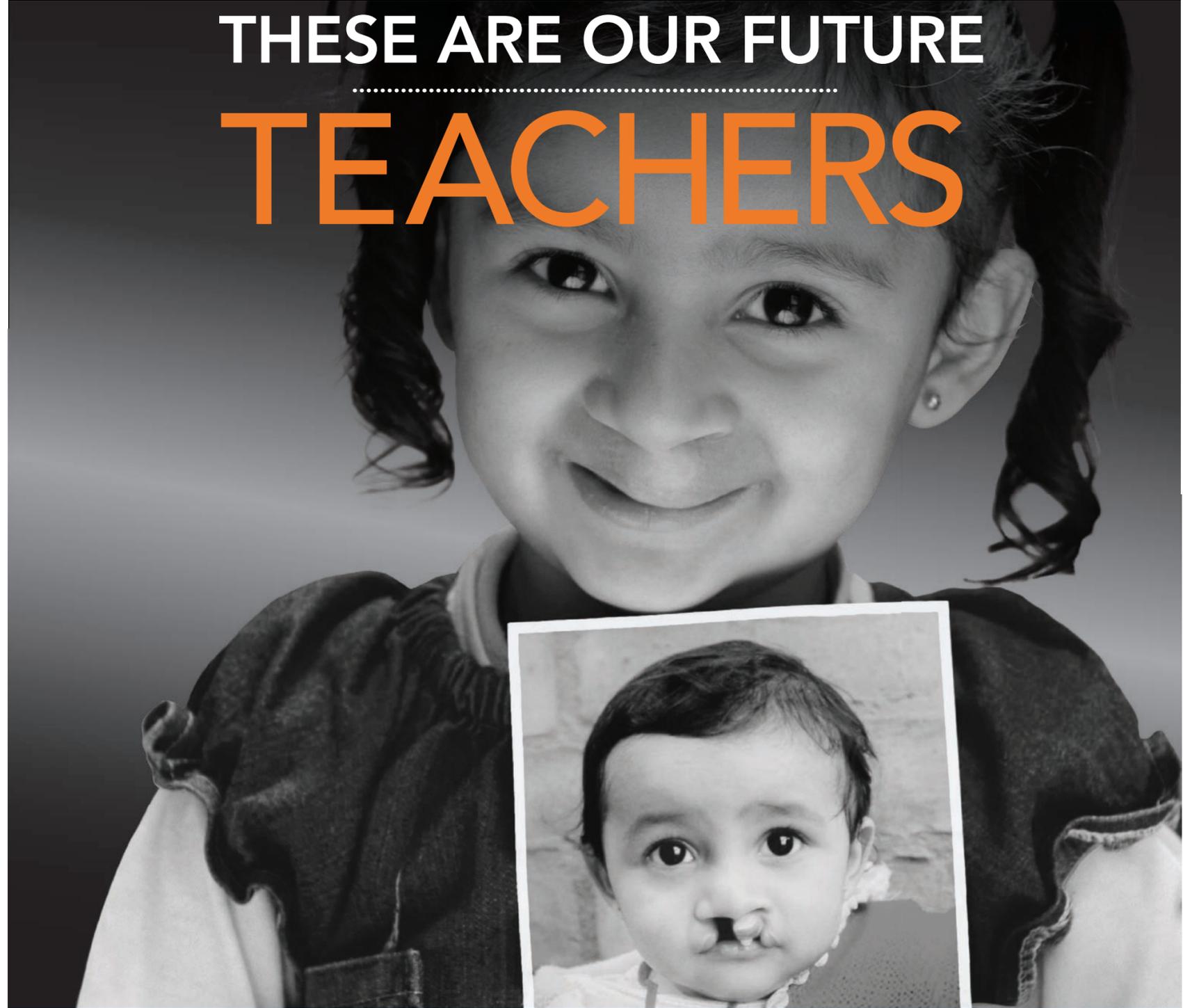
Children as young as seven are encouraged to see an orthodontist. This isn't so they can get braces (which Solomon contends is too young), but rather so that a trained specialist can examine the child's teeth, mouth and

jaw development. This is to prevent or mitigate any potential issues occurring as the child gets older. There are some preventative measures that don't include braces.

Orthodontists see a cross-section of people. For some, they want to look better, while for others it's about function. People are living with the pain and negative effects of grinding teeth or clicking of the jaws and these issues can be addressed. "Teeth are the first thing people see, and they have more self-confidence when their teeth look good," says Solomon. "What better job is there than making people feel great about themselves?"

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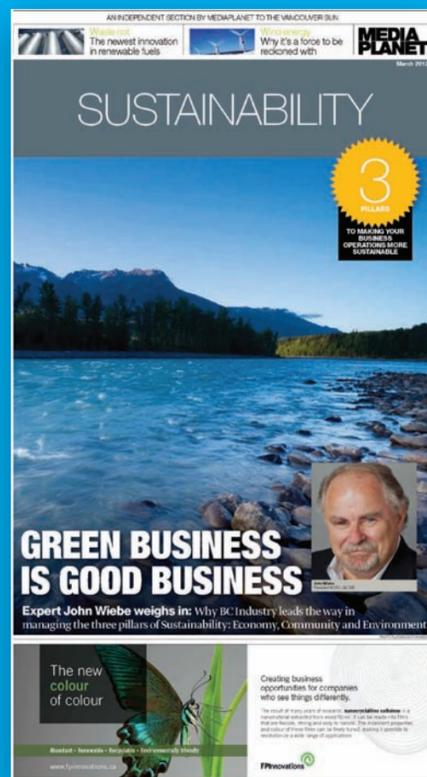
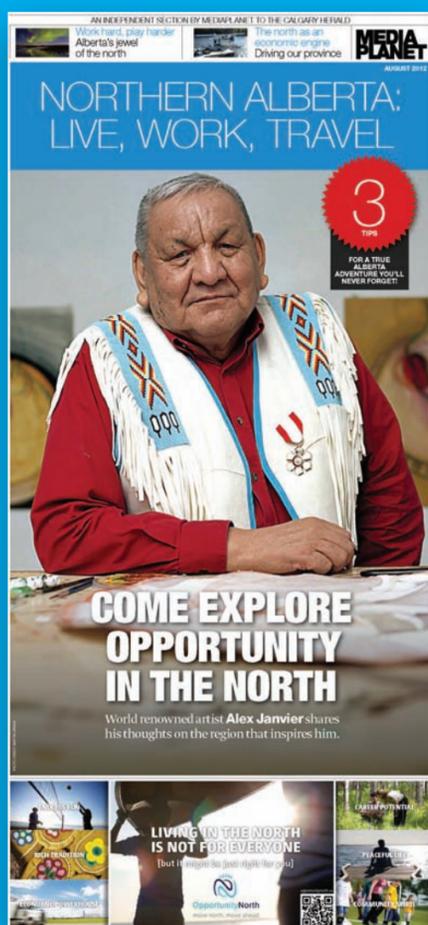
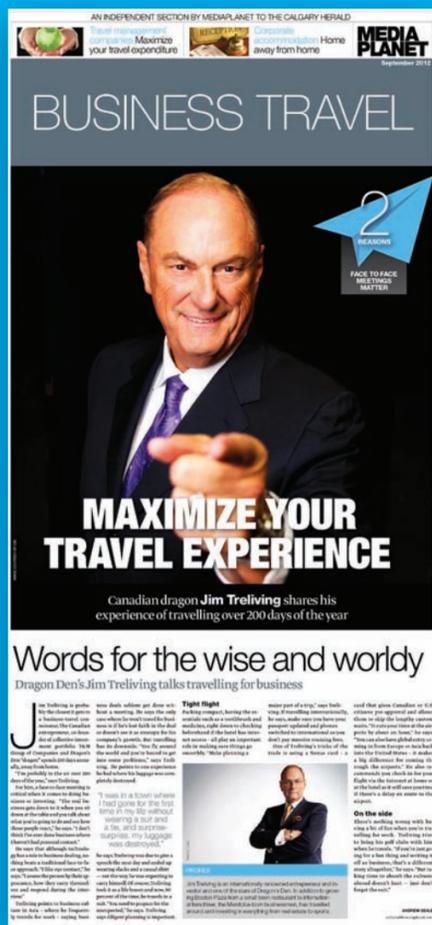
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