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New Guide on Methamphetamine’s Effect on Oral Health Will Serve as Key Educational Resource for Dental Professionals

May 1, 2008 (EAGAN, Minn.) — A first of its kind, comprehensive guide on methamphetamine’s effect on oral health, called *Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals* has been launched. The guide, which was developed by **Hazelden**, a nationally renowned addiction rehabilitation center and funded by **DeCare Dental**, administrator of **Securian Dental** plans, includes the most recent clinical research about meth use and its often devastating effects on a user’s oral health.

“At first glance, the effects of meth seem overwhelming,” said Stephen Wagner, D.D.S., co-author of *Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals*. “We see virulent, rampant caries, periodontal disease, and early tooth loss in patients who have used meth. Organized dentistry must raise public awareness of the solutions available through clinical services and preventative care. Dental professionals are in a position to reduce the impact of meth, as they may be one of the first to recognize a patient’s condition and to offer assistance.”

According to Wagner, there are three elements, which when combined leads meth users to experience escalated dental decay. “Due to the stimulants found in meth, addicts often clench and grind their teeth so excessively that it causes teeth to loosen, fracture or possibly crack in half,” he said. “During binging, meth addicts also tend to neglect their oral hygiene, which causes increased plaque, gingivitis and periodontitis, receding gums and tooth loss. Meth can also lead to a reduction in saliva flow—this can lead users to drink sugary soft drinks, which in turn creates an acidic environment around teeth. We feel these signs can be helpful for dental professionals.”

“We are pleased to form another great collaboration, this time with Hazelden Foundation, a national nonprofit organization well-known for its comprehensive approach to treating and responding to issues around addiction,” said Ann Johnson, director of Community Affairs for DeCare Dental and Securian Dental plans. The guide provides information about meth, how it can affect the dental health and lives of those addicted to it, and how best to approach and care for a patient with meth-affected teeth.

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The guide also offers:

- Signs and symptoms of meth users
- Sample questions for dental professionals to ask patients who may have used meth
- Protocol for treating a patient with meth-affected teeth and resulting oral decay
- Meth resource directory

“We appreciate having this additional resource for dentists, as they are encountering patients with devastating dental disease related to meth use,” said Dr. John R. Luther, Senior Vice President, Dental Practice and Professional Affairs at the American Dental Association. “Hazelden is able to educate both the public and dental professionals about the addictive process. In this publication Hazelden collaborated with dental professionals who can share their clinical experience in treating people with ‘meth mouth’. We are appreciative of the funding provided for this endeavor by DeCare Dental and Securian Dental plans.”

Meth and Oral Health: A Guide for Dental Professionals was developed in collaboration with the Hazelden Foundation. Funding was provided by DeCare Dental, administrator of Securian Dental plans. Contributors to the guide included **Charles Tatlock**, D.D.S., M.P.H., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico School of Medicine, **Stephen Wagner**, D.D.S., private practice and **Nancy Williams**, R.D.H., Ed.D., Professor of Dental Hygiene, University of Tennessee Health Service Center.

A free PDF of the guide is available at www.securiandental.com. The authors are also developing two free PowerPoint presentations on meth mouth that can be used for community, public health and professional audiences. A script to frequently asked questions will accompany each presentation. These presentations will be available summer of 2008 at www.securiandental.com.

About Hazelden

Hazelden Foundation, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden’s comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of individual, family and professional needs, including addiction treatment and continuing care services for youth and adults, publishing research, higher learning, public education and advocacy. For more information on Hazelden, visit www.hazelden.org.

About Securian Dental Plans

Securian Dental is available nationwide. Securian Dental is underwritten by Securian Life Insurance Company and administered by DeCare Dental Health International, LLC. In California, Securian Dental is underwritten by Securian Life Insurance Company, offered through DeCare Dental Insurance Services, LLC and administered by DDHI Administrators, LLC. Coverage is offered under policy form series 03-30612 or a state variation thereof. For more information on Securian Dental plans, visit www.securiandental.com or call (toll-free) 866-222-6507.

With nearly 40 years of proven success, the DeCare Dental family of companies is a leading dental benefits management group that oversees more than \$1 billion in managed revenues, serving 3.9 million individuals in 21,000 employer groups including Fortune 500 corporations, small businesses, non-profits and government entities in the United States and overseas. Through its affiliates and partners, it is active in all major markets across the United States and has also expanded its operations into Europe. As a company focused on global leadership in oral health care management, DeCare Dental sets the standard for innovation, quality, service and results.

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