

Dentists can help identify patients at risk of heart attack

Dentists can help identify patients who are likely to die of a heart attack or stroke, says a Swedish study.

The study involved 200 men and women aged over 45 who did not have any known cardiovascular problems.

During a routine visit to their dentists in Boras and Gothenburg in Sweden, they were also checked for known risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

'These risk factors are not normally manifested in the mouth, which is why the dentists went beyond their normal check-up routine,' says Mats Jontell, professor at the Sahlgrenska Academy.

'They also took the patients' blood pressure (BP) and checked total cholesterol and blood sugar levels,' he adds.

The risk of a fatal cardiovascular disease was calculated using a software known as HeartScore.

The dentists felt that 12 men had a 10 percent risk of developing a fatal cardiovascular disease over the next 10 years and advised them to see their doctors. Six of the 12 were subsequently prescribed medication to lower their BP, according to a Sahlgrenska release.

'Dentists regularly see a very large percentage of the Swedish population, and if there is sufficient interest they could also screen for cardiovascular risk factors which, untreated, could lead to a heart attack or stroke,' says Jontell.

These findings were published in the Journal of the American Dental Association.

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