

# THE CONNECTION

February 2012

## Good oral health = good heart health



**Smile, you're going to live longer!**

You've always known that brushing and flossing your teeth was important. Good oral care is essential, of course, if you want to avoid cavities, gum disease and worse. But now researchers are learning that taking

care of your mouth can help your whole body. It might even extend your life.

If you have gum disease, you may be at a higher risk for heart attacks and strokes. The bacteria that cause gum disease can spread through your bloodstream and lead to the formation of blood clots. These clots can then cause heart attacks and strokes.

More than 75 percent of Americans over age 35 have some form of gum disease and are at increased risk for heart disease. You can lower your heart-disease risk by taking good care of your mouth:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste;

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- Floss every day;
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks;
- Visit your dentist regularly for check-ups and cleaning.

Source: Mississippi State Department of Health

## Q&A: Checking up on the CONNECTION Dental Network

2011 was quite a year for GEHA's proprietary network, CONNECTION Dental. We sat down with Shannon Reynolds, GEHA's Provider Network Manager, to get a recap of the past 12 months and a look ahead to 2012.

### **Q: What was your biggest focus for the network in 2011?**

Shannon Reynolds: We targeted about 35,000 dentists nationwide to bring into the CONNECTION Dental Network. Our recruitment team worked very hard contacting the dental offices to discuss the benefits of becoming a preferred provider, and as a result our network enjoyed a 5.3 percent increase in network providers.

### **Q: What was your biggest challenge in 2011?**

Reynolds: Our network became URAC-accredited for credentialing in 2011, and we started performing site visits to our large provider groups and working with them to update contracts to meet the accreditation standards. We also started using the services of a credentials verification vendor to primary-source verify provider credentials, and we began quality improvement monitoring for continuing compliance with criteria for provider participation in the network. It took a little longer than we had expected to get all of the new verification processes streamlined, and that in turn created

some challenges in our credentialing process. However, we saw significant improvements in the last half of 2011 and expect that to continue in 2012.

### **Q: Did you implement any new recruitment strategies last year?**

Reynolds: We targeted fewer providers through our direct-mail campaign, and that gave our recruiters more time to spend with each prospective dentist. We increased the number of applications received by targeted dentists from 4.7 percent in 2010 to 12.1 percent in 2011. In addition to the smaller number of targeted providers last year, we increased our visibility by attending industry conferences.

See Q&A continued on back

# Let me introduce you to...



## Denise Guthrie

Since 2001, Denise has been the Client Relations Account Supervisor for PPO USA – but it's far from her first stop at GEHA, where she

has worked for more than 28 years. She has also worked in Claims, Customer Service, and PPO Network Management positions, and that depth and variety of experience benefits her every day in her current position.

With more than a decade spent as the Client Relations Account Supervisor, Denise has gained experience in contract management, call center operations, oversight and development of the Client Relations staff. She has also developed close relationships with clients, and that helps her ensure the

highest level of client satisfaction. She manages client implementation projects, ongoing client management and works closely with internal teams at GEHA.

Denise has been a volunteer on the NADP Membership Committee for the past two years. She enjoys learning about the industry through her relationships with other NADP members.

Denise is the fourth of five girls in her family. When not at GEHA, she enjoys traveling, learning about wines and various cuisines, and spending time with her sisters and their families. Last year included a trip to northern Italy with her niece (who was studying there), a vacation to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, a driving trip from Missouri to Tennessee, as well as many weekend excursions.

## Q&A: CONNECTION Dental Network

*continued from front*

We attended events that were presented by the American Association of Dental Office Managers, the American Academy of Dental Group Practice, the national American Dental Association and the National Association of Dental Plans. We appreciated the opportunity to hear what dentists have to say about the dental industry and the PPO networks.

### **Q: What are you plans for 2012?**

Reynolds: We are planning a nationwide recruitment this year and

have identified more than 100,000 dentists we want to solicit. We will be contacting the dentists and directing them to our website, where they can complete their application and contract for participation. For currently participating dentists, we are working on a project that will redesign our website for easier navigation and the ability to manage their office demographic data electronically. We also hope to continue improving our Rewards Program to attract and retain dentists in our network.

## Did you know?

- If you are a current CONNECTION Dental client, you may offer CONNECTION Vision to your members at no additional cost.
- CONNECTION Hearing members have an unconditional satisfaction guarantee on all products purchased from a participating network provider.

## Upcoming Events...

### **February 1-4, 2012**

CONNECTION Dental will exhibit at the 40th Annual AADGP Conference & Exhibition in Las Vegas.

### **March 4-8, 2012**

PPO USA will attend EXHIBITOR 2012 in Las Vegas.

### **April 12-14, 2012**

CONNECTION Dental will exhibit at the UMKC School of Dentistry Midwest Dental Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

### **September 6-8, 2012**

CONNECTION Dental will exhibit at the AADOM Annual Dental Managers Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz.

### **September 10-13, 2012**

PPO USA will exhibit at NADP's CONVERGE 2012 in Phoenix.

### **November 11-14**

PPO USA will attend the IFEBP's 58th Annual Employee Benefits Conference in San Diego.



## NETWORK BY THE NUMBERS

# Connection<sup>®</sup>

DENTAL

As of January 1, 2012, the CONNECTION Dental network consists of

- 93,354 Participating Provider Locations and
- 45,721 Individual Participating Providers