

HARRISBURG, Pa., Feb. 26, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- [The latest findings from a landmark oral health study by United Concordia and Highmark Inc.](#) show that annual medical costs are lower by \$2,956 and \$1,029 for individuals with heart disease or cerebrovascular disease (stroke), respectively, who are treated for gum disease.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130226/PH65641> )

"Once again, our UCWellness<sup>SM</sup> study findings highlight the important role good oral health plays in overall health," said James Bramson, D.D.S., chief dental officer for United Concordia. "Treating chronic health conditions like heart disease and stroke comes with a very high health care cost; dental disease is preventable or treatable at a much lower cost and the beneficial effects through reduced health care costs are significant."

Last March, United Concordia released the first round of study findings that showed annual reductions in medical costs, hospitalizations and physician visits are possible for individuals with diabetes who received treatment and ongoing maintenance for gum disease. In November, the dental carrier released a second round of findings that revealed individuals with diabetes, who are treated at least seven times for gum disease, can also realize reduced pharmaceutical costs.

"Both sets of findings clearly demonstrate that treating an individual with diabetes who has gum disease can help lower costs," said Dr. Bramson. "The first round revealed a significant reduction in hospitalizations (33 percent), physician visits (13 percent) and overall medical costs (of \$1,814) per year, while the second set revealed savings of \$1,477 in drug costs."

Starting July 1, United Concordia will expand the diseases covered by its UCWellness dental program to include heart disease and stroke. UCWellness, available since March, is the first dental program to integrate a member engagement and education component, as well as 100 percent coverage for periodontal surgery benefits that members need to treat their disease.

"When you look at the savings our study identifies on multiple conditions, it is clear our new dental wellness program can help encourage good oral health, overall wellness and savings in the long run," said Dr. Bramson.

Additional findings related to periodontal care in pregnant women and patients with rheumatoid arthritis will be released in the near future. "We believe these additional findings will show medically related cost savings as well," said Dr. Bramson.

The United Concordia/Highmark Inc. study, conducted by lead researcher Marjorie Jeffcoat, D.M.D., professor and Dean Emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine, is the largest of its kind showing a connection between oral health and medical costs.

Visit [the UCWellness Oral Health Study](#) on [United Concordia's website](#) to learn more.

SOURCE United Concordia Dental

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<https://news.unitedconcordia.com/2013-02-26-Gum-disease-treatment-can-lower-annual-medical-costs-for-people-with-heart-disease-and-stroke>