

59th MDW focuses on providing 'The Perfect Patient Experience'

By Staff Sgt. Christopher Carwile
59th Medical Wing Public Affairs

In another step toward building a climate of patient-centered care, the 59th Medical Wing held a seminar Oct. 15 primarily for patient advocates whose charter is to provide "The Perfect Patient Experience."

"We are passionately dedicated to a culture of patient-centered care," said Maj. Gen. Bart Iddins, 59th MDW commander.

The seminar, led by retired Chief Master Sgts. David Spector and Timothy Dickens, focused on customer service. After deciding on eight critical areas that impact the overall patient experience, members were broken into groups, each covering a different area.

"We held the seminar as a way to share General Iddins' vision for customer service in the 59th Medical Wing," said Maj. Janet Blanchard, Business Innovation chief. "We are trying to educate all of the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Corey Hook

Staff Sgt. Christian Bagtas performs a computed tomography scan at the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. The current scheduling system for radiology services saves the Air Force more than \$1 million and improves patient's access to care. Bagtas is a diagnostic imaging technologist assigned to the 59th Radiology Squadron.

patient advocates on the expectation of striving for the perfect patient experience."

Blanchard explained that the traditional customer service model left advocates with

divided loyalties - wanting to be the voice of patients, but also feeling a need to defend

their duty sections' practices, coworkers and supervisors.

"While we applaud them [patient advocates] for their loyalty, we need to reinforce that the patient is at the center. To help with this, the chief master sergeants of the 59th Medical Wing have enthusiastically joined the 'Perfect Patient Experience' bandwagon. They are ready to assist the patient advocates," Blanchard said.

The seminar focused on more than just training, using the critical area discussions to come up with real-world solutions. The discussions were geared to produce recommended changes in the 59th MDW, along with a 90-day implementation plan.

Iddins and the executive staff will be presented with these plans, which will be evaluated for possible implementation.

"Every health care related decision must be centered on the patient," said Iddins. "It is our privilege and honor to serve our nation's veterans and their families."

Tobacco use and oral health

By Tech. Sgt. Karen Nelson
59th Dental Group

It is common knowledge that tobacco use has significant negative effects on the body.

In fact, it is one of the leading causes of preventable illnesses and death in the United States, and now studies have shown that tobacco use also has an effect on your oral health.

Many people are shocked when they discover the effects of tobacco use on the oral cavity, said Kelli Arricale, 59th Dental Group registered dental hygienist. Tar and nicotine found in tobacco not only stain

teeth and cause bad breath, but also slow the healing process after a tooth extraction or other surgeries and can lead to periodontal disease, leukoplakia and oral cancer.

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, tobacco use has been identified as a risk factor in the development and progression of periodontal disease. Recent studies have also linked tobacco use to approximately 75 percent of periodontal disease among adults.

According to the American Dental Association, some signs of oral cancer are gray, red or

white patches in the mouth, tenderness or numbness, and difficulty in chewing and/or speaking. If you notice any of these signs contact your dentist or health care provider as soon as possible to schedule a full evaluation.

Smokers are also at a higher risk for other oral health problems including tooth decay and gingivitis.

Gingivitis is an early stage of periodontal disease in which the gums may feel tender, swollen and bleed easily upon brushing and/or flossing. Leukoplakia is a whitish, thick patch that can be found on

the gums, tongue or insides of the cheek and may lead to the development of oral cancer.

Ceasing tobacco use is the only way to reduce your risk of tobacco-related health problems.

In addition to negative affects it has on your oral health, tobacco use also increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. Quitting tobacco products can be difficult due to the addictive quality of nicotine. It is important and helpful to have a support system such as family and friends to help you beat the addiction.

Smoking cessation classes for active duty service members are available through the Clinical Health Psychology department located

at Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center JBSA-Lackland, at 292-5968.

For more information on the effects of tobacco use as well as helpful tips in quitting, visit the following sites: the American Cancer Society at <http://www.cancer.org>, the American Dental Association website at <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/s/smoking-and-tobacco>, the American Lung Association Quit Line, toll-free number 1-877-695-7848 and/or website <http://www.lung.org/> or <http://www.UCanQuit.org>.

No matter how you choose to quit, make today the day you choose to live a healthier tobacco-free life for yourself and your loved ones.

