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## Oral Health in the ICU Needs Attention



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Oral health is often of lesser concern in the ICU, according to Dr. Cindy Munro, who gave a presentation recently at the American Association of Critical Care Nurses 2014 National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition.

Dr. Munro has focused on oral health in her research, and says in an interview with Medscape Medical News that good mouth care not only makes patients more comfortable, but can reduce the risk of ventilator-associated pneumonia. Reduction in risk of VAP is not due to brushing teeth, but applying chlorhexidine, and thus reducing the number of organisms in the mouth. Application of chlorhexidine twice a day is part of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's ventilator bundle. Munro observes that although there is no evidence that brushing teeth helps in preventing pneumonia, there are plenty of good reasons to brush patient's teeth, including reducing inflammation and reducing the risk of bacteraemia. In the absence of guidelines on how often to brush patients' teeth in the ICU, Dr. Munro plans research on optimal frequency in regards to risk and benefits.

Source: Medscape Medical News  
Image source: freeimages.com

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