

## **“THE ORAL HEALTH-SYSTEMIC HEALTH CONNECTION: A NEW RESPONSIBILITY FOR DENTISTRY”**

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dentists and physicians believed that oral infection-oral sepsis was responsible for causing or contributing to most of the diseases that occurred in humans. But by mid-century it was apparent that oral infection-oral sepsis could not explain all of mankind's diseases and interest in the relationship between oral disease and systemic disease waned. Then in 1989, with a series of intriguing reports from Finland, it again became apparent that oral infections such as periodontal disease may indeed be a contributor to systemic disease. Modern epidemiological methodology employing large data sets suggest that there is a significant link between chronic periodontitis in adults and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, pulmonary disease and pre-term low birth weight infants. We are beginning to understand the biologic plausibility of such a relationship and intervention trials being conducted provide compelling evidence that treating periodontitis will reduce systemic disease. Clearly, a new role for dental (and medical) professionals in assuring a person's oral health-total health is quickly emerging.

### Education Objectives:

1. Attendees should appreciate the historical perspective of oral infection- oral sepsis being linked to systemic disease causation.
2. Attendees should understand the biologic plausibility (rationale) for considering that oral infection can contribute to certain systemic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, pulmonary disease and pre-term low birth weight infants.
3. Attendees should be familiar with the information gained from examining population-based data sets that suggests a strong relationship between periodontitis and certain systemic conditions.
4. Attendees should understand the current findings from intervention studies that are confirming a link between oral disease and systemic conditions.
5. Attendees should begin to formulate plans for the new role of dentistry in ensuring the overall health of all persons through good oral health.