

MCC dental hygiene students offering free dental screenings Feb. 4 for qualified individuals

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Mesa Community College dental hygiene students are offering complimentary oral health screenings to qualified individuals this weekend at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health Clinic.

Appointments are available at 9 and 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. this Saturday, Feb. 4, and may be made by calling 480-248-8195. Time slots are on a first come, first serve basis.

Qualified screening candidates are those who have not received dental health care for three years or longer or who have been diagnosed with dental health issues. Screenings are not

comprehensive exams and treatment will not be provided during the event.

"If the patient qualifies for therapeutic, deeper cleanings for an advanced perio/gum disease infection treatment, treatment will include customized oral health care services," said Kimberlee Zitek, director of the MCC dental hygiene program.

Patients are charged for such services, if needed. However, current MCC students (with an MCC student ID) receive services at a discount with a high-end estimate of \$360.

Zitek adds that in private dental practice, this treatment could cost a minimum of \$1,000 without dental insurance. "And sometimes with dental insurance it's still out-of-pocket about \$600-\$800," she said.

Screening participants must agree to have a full set of X-rays taken. If patients request a copy of their X-rays, the fee is \$20. X-rays can be picked up during business hours at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health Clinic.

"This event provides access to low-cost dental hygiene services to community members in need. The complementary screening includes a thorough health history exam, including blood pressure and glucose screenings, along with head/neck and oral soft/hard tissue evaluations," Zitek said. "Many underlying health concerns have been identified by our students during this process like high blood pressure or high glucose reading concerns in addition to suspicious lesions warranting referrals to physicians and oral surgeons."

Although the event does not provide restorative dental treatment, "as dental hygienists, we do provide patients with referrals to seek out dental treatment with our dental school partnership or preferred dental home," she explained.

The event also benefits second-year dental hygiene students in many ways, Zitek noted.

"For our students to develop advanced instrumentation skill sets and matriculate successfully throughout our program's curriculum, they need exposure to treating patients with more complex periodontal disease," she said.

Students must pass a state licensure clinical exam that requires the advanced instrumentation skills developed during their last two semesters while treating more complex periodontally involved patients.

"Moreover, it enables our students to build rapport with community members, strengthen interpersonal communication skills and exercise compassion for others as our program places a sharp focus on providing our patients with holistic oral health care," Zitek said.

Some participants will be invited to participate as patients in the MCC dental hygiene program receiving personalized fee-for-service care provided by MCC dental hygiene students. Students provide quality care using the latest technology in comfortable surroundings at fees less than most private dental practices. All patient care is provided under the supervision of licensed dental hygienists and supervising dentists.

The Mesa Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic provides a full range of dental hygiene services offered during evening hours at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health Clinic, 5855 E. Still Circle in Mesa. To schedule an appointment outside of this screening event, contact the clinic at 480-248-8195.

Additional information about the MCC dental hygiene program and the dental clinic is available online at mesacc.edu/dental.

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