

# BUSINESS

## Dentist screens patients for inflammation

### Bloody gums may signify other problems

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STAFF INTERN

When Americans visit their dentist, about 75 percent have bloody gums. While some may consider that normal, it is not healthy, according to Dr. Ron Schefdore of Celebrity Smiles in Westmont.

"People think it's normal for their gums to bleed when they brush every day," said Julie Volpert, a certified dental assistant in Schefdore's office.

Bleeding gums are a sign of chronic inflammation, which is the basis of all disease, said Schefdore, who lives in Hinsdale. Chronic inflammation raises C-reactive protein levels and cholesterol levels in the blood, as well as blood sugar.

### Indicator of heart attack

C-reactive protein level is a better indicator than cholesterol for a future heart attack, according to a Nov. 14, 2003, article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Schefdore said.

After reading the article, Schefdore wondered what would happen if he tested the C-reactive protein levels of patients with bleeding gums and then aggressively treated the condition.

Schefdore began sending patients with bloody gums to get a blood test for blood sugar, cholesterol and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein. Then the patients used Closys II mouthwash, toothpaste and plastic toothpicks to address the gum problem. After that, the patient got another blood test. The whole procedure requires three treatments, two weeks apart.

When patients used Closys II mouthwash and toothpaste, C-reactive protein levels were reduced 50 to 90 percent.

"We avoid (dental) surgery in many cases and it's a lifetime of oral health because we teach them how to take care of themselves with these products," Schefdore said.

If blood levels of the inflam-

mation markers don't reduce after treating the gums, then Schefdore said he knows there is another, underlying medical problem.

"If the C-reactive protein levels don't reduce, then we refer the patient to their physician to diagnose the underlying medical condition," Schefdore said. It is rare for the blood levels not to drop, he added.

### Diabetes discovered

When Richard Mueller of Brookfield visited Schefdore for a regular checkup, Schefdore found something wrong with his gums.

"He sent me to the La Grange hospital where they drew blood and spotted Type 2 Diabetes," Mueller said.

Mueller has since found a physician and is being treated for his diabetes.

Schefdore said his blood screening procedure helped another dental patient, who subsequently got a medical diagnosis for early-stage colon cancer.

Schefdore was recently certified to do finger-prick blood tests in his office. Volpert and Jennifer Crudele, office manager, helped Schefdore become certified. He is the first dentist to receive CLIA certification for moderately complex blood labs.

Within the next 60 days, the office will start a new procedure for taking the finger-prick blood sample so an assistant can do it.

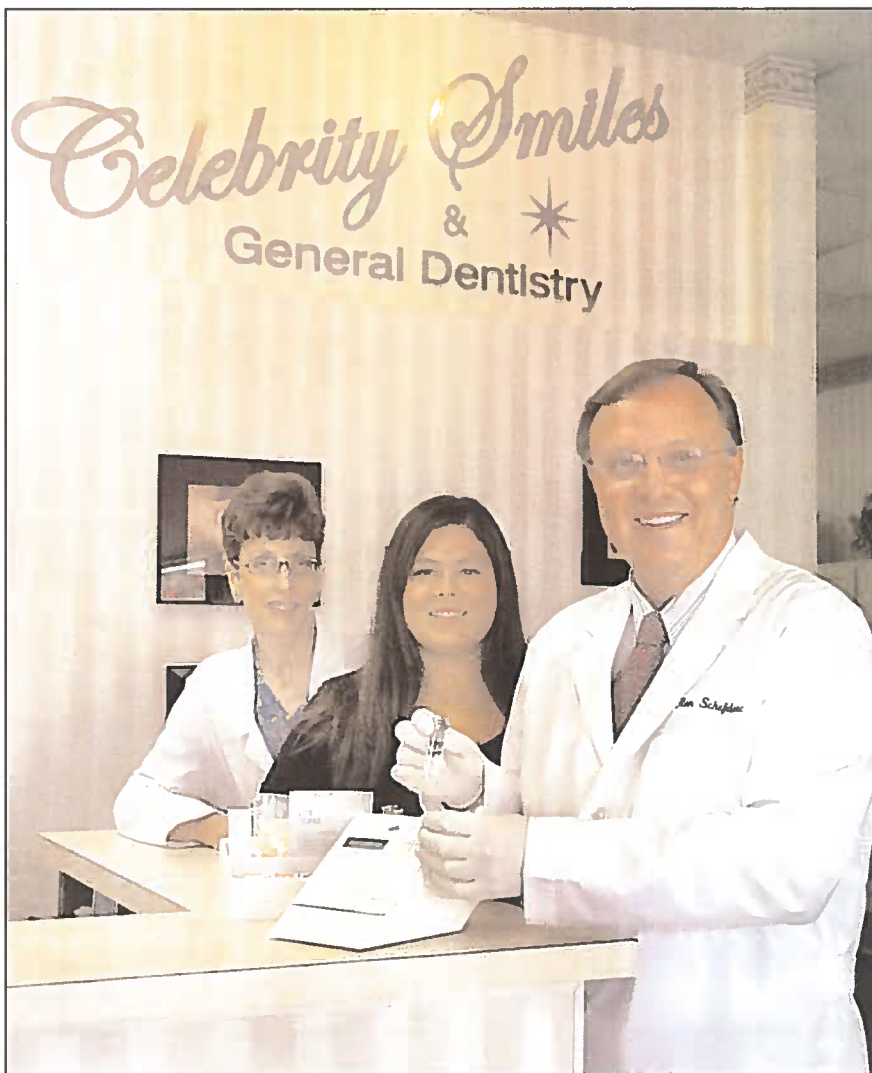
It costs \$75 for each of the two blood tests. The patient pays for the tests because the dental office does not submit the information to insurance companies.

When Sarah Traan took her mother-in-law for her six-month check-up, Schefdore took a sample of her mother-in-law's blood.

"The results were really startling," Traan said.

They showed that Traan's mother-in-law's diabetes was out of control. After the tests, Traan took her mother-in-law to new doctors who have given her new medication.

"If Dr. Schefdore hadn't looked in her mouth, hadn't draw her blood, I don't know how much longer this would have been going on for," Traan said.



Dr. Ron Schefdore of Hinsdale holds equipment his office uses to take blood samples from patients. Jennifer Crudele, office manager, and Julie Volpert, certified dental assistant, helped Schefdore become certified to take samples and now help in the procedure. (Doings photo by Herb Shenkin.)

If patients have a bloody tooth cleaning, they should request this procedure from their dentists, Schefdore said.

"Because 75 percent of Americans have bleeding gums, our current floss and brush system has failed, so that's why we developed this," he said.

### Dentists a 'safety net'

The dentist is a safety net for the physician, Schefdore said. "If physicians and dentists

would work together it would be better health for Americans almost overnight," he said.

Schefdore is spreading the word about his procedure and training other offices. Dental offices are very receptive but want an easy way to incorporate the procedure, he said.

"What I'm trying to do is train dentists to be oral physicians," he said.

"People think to segregate the mouth from the rest of the body. What goes on in the

mouth stays in the mouth," Traan said. "That doesn't make any sense to me at all."

"This could change dentistry forever. This is the future of dentistry today," Crudele said. "You cannot have total health without good oral health."

Schefdore, who was recently featured on the cover of "Dentistry Today" magazine, said he wants to make the blood screening standard dental care within the next five years.

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