



Bethany Airdrie a Champion of Oral Care

Story by Diane Harvey, Bethany Care Society

Residents of Bethany Airdrie are reaping the benefits of the Oral Care Champion Training Program, developed by Alberta Health Services (AHS). Bethany Airdrie was the first pilot site for the program, through which AHS registered dental hygienists educate caregivers on oral hygiene care for their clients. The training includes information about oral health and oral diseases, oral hygiene products and daily mouth care for residents. It also involves demonstrations and participation in assessments and mouth care with colleagues as well as residents.

Haley Brietzke, Licensed Practical Nurse, and Barb Hunter, Health Care Aide, are two of the staff members at Bethany Airdrie who received training through this program, and now provide oral assessments to long-term care residents as well as education for other staff at Bethany Airdrie.

Haley describes the positive effects of these oral assessments for residents like 92-year-old Loril Bohne. "We were doing our six-month assessment and discovered his dentures didn't fit. We actually found 15 people who needed their dentures adjusted," says Haley. Now Loril has new dentures and has gone back on a solid diet.

Since the inception of the oral assessments program, the oral health of residents at Bethany Airdrie has improved by more than 40 per cent. The education sessions for staff take place in Bethany Airdrie's general meeting room and also on the care units, providing residents with convenient access to good oral health care.

"If you have good oral health, you can have good overall health. Poor oral hygiene can contribute to problems such as heart disease, diabetes, gum disease and aspiration pneumonia. Bacteria inhaled can be found in lungs. Especially for the frail elderly, this can affect their lives," says Del Pollard, Dental Hygienist for AHS.

Following the success at Bethany Airdrie, the pilot project has since been rolled out to Bethany Calgary.

Information about the project is also posted on the Alberta Health Services website at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2351.asp>.