



A Letter from  
Stanley M. Bergman

October 1, 2020

To Our Valued Customers,

### **The Mouth Is Speaking**

The world has known that oral health matters since at least the year 400, the first recorded use of this Latin phrase: *“Noli equi dentes inspicere donati.” Do not look a gift horse in the mouth.*

The ancients knew even then that examining a horse’s mouth was essential to determining its age and health – in other words, the value of the gift. Today, more than 1,600 years later, we are reminded yet again, and in a most unfortunate way, that the mouth is connected to the body and the mind.

Recent media reports detail a surge in bruxism – excessive teeth grinding or jaw clenching that can lead to cracked teeth, headaches, lockjaw, gum tenderness, and other issues. The primary cause, according to dentists, physicians, and psychologists, is pandemic-related stress. This is confirmed by research released this week from the American Dental Association’s Health Policy Institute, which reports that the [majority of dentists](#) are seeing an increase in stress-related oral health conditions among their patients.

The discussion of the connection between oral health and overall health tends to focus on a physical relationship, such as the association of periodontitis with diabetes. Yet the pandemic is reminding us that *everything is connected* – the mind, the mouth, and the body.

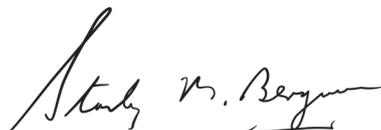
The pandemic is generating heightened levels of emotional and mental distress, which leads people to grind their teeth, which then causes the oral cavity to suffer. The connection is clear.

Yet for far too long, oral health – like pandemic preparedness – tends to be ignored by those who control public health policy and determine where health care dollars are spent. This is both odd and disappointing, since we’ve known for more than 1,600 years that oral health is essential. It’s why a veterinarian’s examination of a dog includes looking in its mouth, which does so much of the talking for the patient.

All of us in the health care community, and not just the dental community, need to heighten our appreciation of the story our mouth is telling us. If your teeth are cracking and your jaw is aching, your physician should pay close attention – maybe there’s a root psychological or emotional problem that needs to be addressed in these pandemic days.

If nothing else, the pandemic has given society reason to take a fresh look at so many beliefs and behaviors that we used to take for granted, such as the absolute necessity of traveling to every business meeting. Perhaps we can use the pandemic to refresh our thinking about treating the whole person – mind and body – by first looking for answers in the mouth.

Sincerely,



**Stanley M. Bergman**  
Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer