

**Embargo: Friday 22 June 2018, 12:30 CEST****EuroPerio9 press release****Oral piercings associated with inflammation of the gums****More awareness is needed about the health risks of oral piercings**

*Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Friday 22 June 2018* – According to a study presented today at EuroPerio9, the world's leading congress in periodontology and implant dentistry, tongue piercings may affect gums and teeth in close proximity with the piercing (1).

“My interest in piercings began when a young female patient presenting unusually severe periodontal destruction was referred to my clinic,” explained Dr Clemens Walter, Department of Periodontology, Endodontology and Cariology, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland. “The patient was periodontally healthy with the exception of the lower incisor teeth. We could not identify any known risk factors. The patient had a tongue piercing. Non-surgical and advanced surgical treatment was performed and was not successful. The patient lost teeth. Since then, I have been curious about this association and started to collect cases.”

For this study, 18 patients (14 female) with a tongue and/or lip piercing from our database of more than 1400 patients treated in our service were included. The mean age of this population was 28,3 + 7.7 years. Three out of 18 patients wore both, i.e. a total of 14 tongue piercings and 7 lip piercings were assessed. Clinical parameters and the maximum wearing time of the lip and/or tongue piercing were recorded. Periodontal findings in teeth close to the piercing were compared to teeth not affected by the piercing.

“Due to ethical considerations, it seems impossible to conduct a prospective study. Therefore the suitable design to answer our question was a retrospective study/ case series,” said Dr Walter.

“We found an association between oral piercings and increased periodontal inflammation, as evident by increased bleeding on probing and increased probing depth and/or attachment loss. The closer teeth were to a tongue piercing, the more affected they were,” explained Dr Walter. “Acknowledging the growing data from all over the world, we now try to create awareness about the consequences of piercings for oral health and we counsel our patients to remove piercings in order to decrease the risk for dental and periodontal complications,” affirmed Dr Walter.

Another abstract (2) presented at EuroPerio9 about two case studies by Dr Bernard Loir, from Brussels, Belgium, also found that for two young (27 and 32 years) female patients, repeated gum damage due to chronic pressure of the metal against teeth and gums during tongue movements when speaking, eating or swallowing, was associated with gum bleeding and infection causing deep lingual infrabony lesions and periodontitis. Tongue piercings were used for 8 to 10 years and finally removed after abscesses, teeth mobility and migration. “The lesions were localized on the lower incisor's lingual side, close to a tongue piercing (the

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most frequent oral localisation of these devices followed by the lip). Periodontal complications occurred in a location hardly visible for the patient and as these teeth have very short roots, tooth mobility and tooth loss in the aesthetic area may be quickly encountered, an uncomfortable situation for such young and mostly female patients,” explained Dr Loir. “For both patients, time consuming and costly surgical treatment and antibiotics were needed and complete regeneration of the lost tissue could not be achieved,” he said.

Dr Loir warns: “Young patients with oral piercings should be made aware of the local and global health risks they take by wearing these useless devices, especially if they compound the risk by smoking and a lack of proper dental hygiene. Piercings interfere daily with chewing, swallowing and speaking and the rate of complications is very high in available literature. Early complication is usually infection due to lack of hygiene in the piercing saloon or when done by the patients themselves with non-sterile material. Bleeding and swelling of the tongue is also very common and may represent a danger for a patient with cardiovascular disease but late complications also occur, such as swallowing the jewellery, teeth chipping and gum recession with lip piercings. Other complications occur in a more silent mode, such as lingual gum recession and bone loss, causing tooth mobility, migration and loss. Other life threatening diseases such as viral contamination (hepatitis, papilloma virus) endocarditis, and cerebral abscesses have also been registered.”

“While awareness with respect to oral complications associated with piercings seems to be slowly increasing, there is yet much to be done,” said Dr Walter. “We are continuing with our research and hope to recruit more patients in order to increase our data base.”

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### Notes to Editors

#### References:

1. Abstract PR131: A retrospective study on the association between oral piercings and clinical signs of periodontal inflammation. To be presented at EuroPerio9 as an e-poster.
2. Abstract PC035: Tongue piercing as a local risk factor of lower incisor lingual periodontitis: a report of two cases. To be presented at EuroPerio9 as an e-poster, clinical report.

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#### [About the EFP](#)

The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) is an umbrella organisation of 30 national scientific societies devoted to promoting research, education and awareness of periodontal science and practice. It represents more than 14,000 periodontists and gum-health professionals from Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East.

#### [About EuroPerio9](#)

EuroPerio is the world’s biggest scientific meeting devoted to periodontology. The most recent of these triennial meetings, EuroPerio8, took place in London in June 2015 and brought together almost 10,000 people. EuroPerio9 will take place from 20 to 23 June 2018 at the [RAI](#), Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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