



**MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 7, 2015**

BC DENTAL HYGIENISTS COMMITTED TO HELPING VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Vancouver, BC – Women experiencing violence will soon be able to find help where they might not expect it – during a visit to their dental hygienist. The BC Dental Hygienists' Association (BCDHA) wants to do its part to help women who are being impacted by violence and abuse. To that end, they have formed a partnership with the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC), are accessing specialized training, and promoting an awareness campaign for the nearly 3,000 registered dental hygienists throughout the province who are their members.

Dental hygienists are in a unique position to be among the first health care professionals to recognize signs of abuse and help survivors. 75% of physical injuries received during episodes of violence against women by an intimate partner are inflicted to the head, face, mouth and neck. Dental hygienists may also witness behavioural indicators of abuse in their practice setting, such as interactions between partners. Over time, they have the opportunity to establish trusting relationships with their clients that could lead to disclosures of abuse. Dental hygienists are committed to making a difference.

BC dental hygienists now have access to an online training program that supports them in recognizing possible indicators of abuse, knowing how to respond, and providing referrals and resources as needed. The BCDHA also has a BC specific resource package to assist dental hygienists in their support efforts with clients, dental team members, fellow dental hygienists, family, friends, and their community.

“Given that 98% of dental hygienists in our province are women and that 1 in 4 Canadian women experience physical violence at some time in their lives, this new partnership with EVA BC is a natural fit,” says Cindy Fletcher, Executive Director of the BCDHA. “We also have to recognize the statistical reality that a number of dental hygienists will themselves experience intimate partner violence at some point in their lives and we want them to know they have the support of their colleagues.”

EVA BC's executive director, Tracy Porteous, agrees. "It's incredibly useful for women to have such an accessible support available at the frontline level. This initiative by the BCDHA is not only a great example of women helping other women, it also demonstrates an exemplary standard of professional leadership. We are very excited to join with the BCDHA in our shared commitment to end violence against women."

BCDHA is committed to raising awareness, supporting education and training, working on standards and policy, and collaborating with other sectors to help end violence against women. They look forward to being another resource in the community and partner to help end violence against women in BC.

EVA BC works with communities across BC to end violence against women and children, supporting more than 240 programs who respond to sexual and domestic violence, child abuse and criminal harassment.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Cindy Fletcher
Executive Director
British Columbia Dental Hygienists Association
T: 604-415-4559 Ext. #304
cfletcher@bcdha.bc.ca
[cell: 604-992-4559](tel:604-992-4559)