

# *Speaker Packet*



*Susan Cotten* BSDH, RDH, OMT  
Oral Cancer Coach, Speaker, Author



# The "Cotten Method" of Screening

## Reduce Liability, Gain Confidence in Screening, Increase Early Detection

Susan Cotten BSDH, RDH, OMT, is recognized in dentistry for her expertise in a comprehensive head and neck exam/oral cancer screening and the Human Papillomavirus. She has performed over 60 thousand oral cancer screenings. Her lectures and workshops give dental and medical professionals more confidence in screening, reduce the risk of liability, and increase early detection. *Susan shares current evidence and research on oral and oropharyngeal cancer using the **four science-based pillars of screening from The "Cotten Method" of screening.***



1. Etiologies 2. Risk Factors 3. Signs and Symptoms 4. Hands-on Screening

Select from her presentations or contact Susan about a customized presentation and/or workshop for your event, study club, DSO, health system, or school.

## Presentations



### ORAL CANCER SCREENING

"It's more than grasping the tongue"

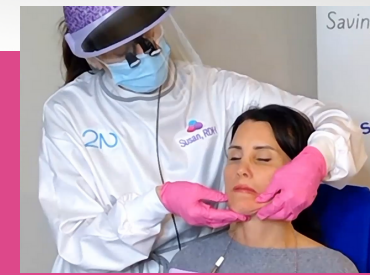
PART ONE (pillars 1-3)  
Etiologies/HPV, Risk Factors,  
Signs and Symptoms



### ORAL CANCER SCREENING

"It's more than grasping the tongue"

PART TWO (pillar 4)  
Best practices of the intraoral  
and extroral evaluation



### ORAL CANCER SCREENING

"It's more than grasping the tongue"

WORKSHOP  
hands-on training



*Oral Cancer Consulting*  
Excellence in Oral Cancer

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# ORAL CANCER SCREENING

## "It's More Than Grasping the Tongue" Part One

Do you struggle with educating patients about HPV and oral cancer?

Does your office have established systems for oral cancer screening, documentation, and referrals?

Ever delayed a referral because a patient wasn't perceived to be at risk or their persistent symptom didn't seem concerning?

Dentistry is consistently changing and in recent years research, evidence, and technology are bringing rapid changes in all areas. At times it can be daunting to keep teams updated, clinicians calibrated, and patients educated. Oral cancer is a part of that ever-changing world of dentistry.

Current evidence reveals that there are known signs and symptoms of oral and oropharyngeal cancer that may be present before anything is identified with the naked eye or by palpation when screening. There are additional risk factors that may increase the risk of oral cancer.

Attendees will gain an appreciation for an updated health history, verbal inquiry of risk factors and persistent signs and symptoms, to help aid in screening and early detection.

This course is a journey into "what we know now" in oral cancer, the first three science based, pillars of screening in the "Cotten Method" - etiologies, additional risk factors, and signs and symptoms. Utilizing current evidence, oral cancer survivor stories, and awareness of liability concerns, attendees will gain a deep understanding of why these three pillars are essential in today's thorough screening, and why screening is more than grasping the tongue.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- List etiologies of oral and oropharyngeal cancer including Betel Quid
- Discuss the Human Papillomavirus/HPV
- Recognize potential signs and symptoms of oral and oropharyngeal cancer
- Name additional risk factors of oral and oropharyngeal cancer
- Articulate importance of an updated health history
- Gain a deeper understanding why a thorough screening today includes a risk assessment and inquiry of persistent signs and symptoms.

**Suggested audience:** Dentists, hygienists, assistants, dental teams, medical providers, medical teams.

**Suggested formats:** Partial day, up to full day when combined with Part Two. In person or virtual.



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# ORAL CANCER SCREENING

## "It's more than grasping the tongue" PART TWO

Ever wish you were more confident when performing the intraoral and extraoral evaluation?

What specific parts of the screening are you unsure about?

"I've never had this done before" is your team calibrated?

Time constraints, a lack of confidence when screening, production-driven procedures taking precedence, or the belief a patient isn't at risk are reported reasons the visual and tactile, extraoral, and intraoral evaluation isn't performed thoroughly or at all. Sometimes there is no reason, it just isn't performed. Dental professionals are at varying stages of skill and confidence in screening. The purpose of this course is to meet dental professionals where they are, and support them in achieving confidence and skill in this life-saving procedure. When a clinician is skilled and confident in performing a procedure it is more likely to be done, and performed efficiently and thoroughly.

This is the 4th pillar of screening in the "Cotten Method". Susan will utilize her comprehensive instructional screening videos, and/or photos, to show what a thorough intraoral and extraoral evaluation entails, discussing provider and patient positioning for optimal visualization, and techniques for palpation. Utilizing Susan's training as a Myofunctional Therapist, attendees will learn Mallampati Score and Tonsil Grade recognition and documentation, and why these are important in the oropharyngeal evaluation. Liability concerns and updated coding will be addressed.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- List components of a thorough extraoral and intraoral evaluation
- Identify Mallampati Score and Tonsil Grade and why these are important in screening
- Discuss components for thorough documentation of the intraoral and extraoral evaluation
- Name the anatomical structures examined in the oropharyngeal evaluation
- Review possible liabilities for dental hygienists and dentists in oral cancer and systems to aid in reducing liability.

**Suggested audience:** Dentists, hygienists, dental teams, physicians, physicians assistants, nurses, medical teams.

**Suggested formats:** Partial day, up to full day when combined with Part One, in person or virtual. Part two alone is excellent as a 1 hour virtual screening webinar as done for Colgate and Young Dental.

# ORAL CANCER SCREENING WORKSHOP

## "It's more than grasping the tongue"

Wish you could practice clinical skills of the oral cancer screening?

What part of the hands-on screening do you want to feel more confident performing?

Unsure about assessing the thyroid?

This workshop reviews etiologies, risk factors, and signs and symptoms included in Part One of "It's More Than Grasping the Tongue". The purpose of this workshop is to meet dental professionals where they are and support them in achieving confidence and skill in the visual and tactile, extraoral, and intraoral evaluation.

The workshop provides an opportunity for hands-on work in a supportive environment with other clinicians seeking to increase their skill and confidence in the visual and tactile, extraoral, and intraoral, evaluation/oral cancer screening.

This workshop will utilize Susan's instructional screening videos and photos as visual teaching tools. Attendees will partner up, don masks and gloves, and put into practice what was shown in the videos. Susan will join in the fun, helping attendees with their specific concerns, such as proper palpation technique, assessing the thyroid, evaluating the oropharynx, etc. so they can experience the first hand "feel" of what they want to be more confident in performing. It's Susan's experience that this provides attendees that "Ah Ha" moment in learning.

\*Recommended attendees bring their loupes with a light, not required.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate a comprehensive intraoral and extraoral evaluation
- List components of a thorough extraoral evaluation
- List components of a thorough intraoral evaluation
- Identify and document Mallampati Score
- Identify and document Tonsil Grade
- Gain an understanding why a thorough screening includes an oral cancer risk assessment



# “Let’s Give Them Something to Talk About” How About the “Oral-Oral Link”!

Are your patients aware their poor oral health is a risk factor for oral cancer?

Do you want to increase your knowledge of HPV?

Would you like to have more confidence sharing information about HPV with patients, and strategies to share this critical information?

The “oral-systemic link” is one of the most popular and critically important topics in dentistry today and with good reason. Poor oral health and oral pathogens are known to have ill effects on systemic health.

There is another conversation that is critically important “oral-oral link” conversation is as important, if not more important to the dental community and patients, than the popular oral-systemic link?

Evidence shows that two persistent oral infections are known to be risk factors for oral cancers. Poor oral health/periodontitis and the oral pathogens associated with this oral disease are known risk factors for oral cancer. Persistent oral infections with oncogenic types of the Human Papillomavirus/HPV, are known to cause over 80% oropharyngeal/throat cancers.

This course will discuss periodontitis and it’s role as a risk factor for oral cancer, and will take a deep dive into the Human Papillomavirus/HPV. Attendees will expand their knowledge of HPV, HPV infections, modes of transmission, HPV vaccine, and oral HPV testing.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the Human Papillomavirus and modes of transmission.
- List all HPV associated cancers.
- Name the anatomical structures of the oropharynx and how to optimally screen the oropharynx.
- Identify and document Tonsil Grade.
- Gain an understanding of Periodontitis and periodontal pathogens as a risk factor for oral cancer.



# "That Won't Happen To Me!"

Protect your income, lifestyle, and family.  
Disability insurance for the dental professional.

Do you have a plan to protect and replace your income in the event you are injured or become ill and can no longer practice clinical dentistry?

During a day in clinical dentistry, clinicians often contort their bodies for optimal visualization, rush between patients to stay on time, and at times work with equipment that isn't optimal ergonomically. All of these can put a clinician at risk for an injury and a musculoskeletal disorder/MSD.

An unforeseen illness, injury, or MSD can prohibit the dental professional from physically being able to work in clinical dentistry or continue with their full clinical schedule.

If you experience an injury or illness what is your plan to replace your income and pay bills until you can return to work, or find another source of income? A proactive approach to income replacement, disability insurance can help maintain a lifestyle, home, and pay bills, when an unexpected injury or illness occurs.

This course will discuss important basics of disability insurance, different riders to consider, and critical information comparing individual policies, employer policies, and group policies. Susan will weave in her experience of a career ending injury and how her disability insurance was instrumental in her keeping her home, after losing her ability to practice clinical dental hygiene.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe disability insurance basics.
2. Identify different riders in disability insurance and discuss the importance to the dental professional.
3. List the differences in individual disability insurance, employer-sponsored disability insurance, and group disability policies.



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**Suggested audience:** Dental hygiene and dental students, practicing dental professionals, dental assistants, dental teams.  
**Suggested formats:** Partial day

*Excellence is defined as the quality of being outstanding or extremely good.  
Susan's mission is to help dental providers achieve excellence in screening!*

*Susan Cotten BSDH, RDH, OMT*

**Susan is dentistry's oral cancer coach!** She lives and breathes early detection of oral and oropharyngeal cancer, thoroughly screening every patient, and reducing the risk of liability for the dental professional. As a skin cancer survivor, Susan advocates for observing the skin of the head and neck for abnormalities during the oral cancer evaluation and making a referral to a dermatologist for further investigation.

There was a time in Susan's dental hygiene when she knew very little about oral cancer and was neither confident nor thorough when performing an oral cancer screening. It was two events within the same week, a heartbreaking conversation with her favorite patient who is an oral cancer survivor, and being selected for Donny Osmond's Make a Difference program, which acted as catalysts for her passion and deep dive into HPV, oral, and oropharyngeal cancer, and the work she does now.

Susan is the founder and CEO of **Oral Cancer Consulting**, she developed the "**Cotten Method**", a dental oral cancer office system and method of screening. Susan believes the entire dental team plays a role in raising awareness, educating patients, and early detection. ***She works with dental and medical professionals in private practice, DSOs, Integrated Health Centers, and FQHCs, to increase their confidence in screening, increase early detection, and reduce the risk of liability.***

Susan is the Dental Workgroup Lead for the Alliance for HPV Free Colorado, a 2024 member of RDH Magazine editorial board, a Regional Coordinator and RDH Advisory Board member at the Oral Cancer Foundation, a director at Dental Codeology Consortium, and KOL for several dental companies, past oral cancer screening coordinator and board member at Colorado Mission of Mercy, She is a published author in RDH Magazine, DentistryToday.com, and DentistryIQ. Susan has organized countless free oral cancer screening events, including the Denver Broncos Health and Wellness Expo, and volunteered with a head and neck oncology surgeon providing free head and neck exams and oral cancer screenings to the homeless. She has appeared on 9News in Denver discussing HPV, the HPV vaccine, and oral cancer.

Susan is the 2020 recipient of the Ethel Covington Award from the Colorado Dental Hygiene Association/CODHA. In 2018, a recipient of the Sunstar RDH Award of Distinction and CODHA Outstanding Contribution Award. Susan founded M.A.D.(Make A Difference) for Healthy Smiles as a 2010-2011 member of Donny Osmond's inaugural Make a Difference program, and received Volunteer of the Year from the Oral Cancer Foundation in 2011. In 2023, Susan was selected the winner of Dentistry's Got Talent, a dental speaking competition consisting of dentists, dental hygienists, consultants, and coaches. Judges were event planners from major dental conferences across the U.S.



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1994 graduate University of Colorado  
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"I've been to your class, it helped save my husbands life. I am going to RDH Under One Roof and hope to take it again"

"One of the best classes for screening I have seen in 19 years."

"Thank you for a very informative class! I'm going in Monday morning and implementing what I've learned. **Best class of the week!**"

"I **loved** that she gave a hands on demonstration of her extraoral examination and **also showed photos and videos of what needs to be done**"

**"The information presented where it can be implemented in the office immediately"**

*"Fun, enthusiastic, loved her presentation"*



*"I practice hygiene differently because of you, and I'm proud of my oral cancer screenings because of your knowledge you shared with me. I wanted to thank you. You are with me every day. Thank you for your influence in my life, Susan!"*

**Dani, RDH**

"Thank you Susan for an informative session in our office on your "Cotten Method" for screening. **Your straight forward systematic approach is thorough and easy to implement**"

*"Excellent resources and speaker intimate knowledge"*

"We are so grateful for your hands on course and workshop yesterday. It was a wonderful way to perfect our oral cancer screening technique. I hope all dental offices opt in for this new version of the "Cotten Method."  
Jennifer Geiselhofer RDH  
owner - Dental at Your Door



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"Hello Susan, my hygiene team and I attended your course in Dallas-RDH UOR last week and **were inspired to be better** at oral cancer screening, better hygienists, and better humans. **Thank you for moving us!** We offered to have free oral cancer screenings at our Harvest Festival, the Dr's think it's super cool and are helping us plan it as we speak. **We loved your lecture!** You brought us to tears" **Keira RDH, BS**

## Past Presentations

- Alliance for HPV Free Colorado (multiple)
- American Dental Association (multiple)
- ADA SmileCon 2022
- American Dental Hygiene Association
- CE Zoom
- Colorado Dental Hygiene Association (multiple)
- Colorado HPV Task Force
- Colorado Northwestern Community College (multiple)
- Community College of Denver (multiple)
- Dental Codeology Master Class
- Dentistry's Got Talent
- Dental Festival Nashville 2022
- Intermountain West HPV Vaccination Coalition
- Laramie County Community College
- Missouri Dental Hygiene Association
- Montana Dental Association (multiple)
- MouthWatch
- Nevada Dental Hygiene Association
- New Jersey Dental Hygiene Association
- RDH Under One Roof (multiple)
- South Dakota Academy of Family Physicians
- Utah Dental Hygiene Association
- Univ. of Colorado School of Dental Medicine (multiple)
- University of Hawaii Manoa Dental Hygiene School
- Univ. of Hawaii Maui College Dental Hygiene school (multiple)
- Wyoming Dental Hygiene Association
- Young Dental (Multiple)
- 2023 presentations and workshops are below:

Rocky Mountain Dental Conference  
Montana Dental Assoc. annual session  
Michigan Dental Assoc. annual session  
Idaho Dental Assoc. annual session  
Western Society of Periodontology  
RDH Under One Roof  
Dental Festival, Vesper Institute  
North Dakota Dental Assoc. annual session  
New Mexico Dental Hygiene Assoc. annual session  
National Network for Oral Health Access  
Maui Dental Community

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## Articles and Podcasts

- "Skin Cancer as a Dental Hygienist" DentistryIQ
  - "Oral Cancer Awareness Month Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic" DentistryToday.com
  - "The state of oral and oropharyngeal cancer screening in our profession" RDH magazine
  - "How to perform a head and neck oral/oropharyngeal cancer screening" RDH magazine
  - "Removing the Stigma of HPV" RDH magazine
  - "Skin Cancer Screening: A Dental Hygienist's Life-Saving Responsibility" RDH magazine
  - "It's time to get comfortable discussing HPV" RDH magazine May 2022
  - "Sunscreen is a must, but which type is best?" RDH magazine July 2022
- 
- IgniteDA podcast: with Kevin Henry
  - Your Dental Top 5 podcast: with Amanda Hill
  - Dentistry's Growing with Grace podcast: with Grace Rizza
  - Women in Dentistry podcast: with MJ Hanlon
  - The Dental Handoff with Dr. Kelly Tanner
  - Tale of Two Hygienists podcast: Student Focused Presents: The Importance of Oral Cancer and HPV Conversations with Patients

## Awards

- Ethyl Covington Award - Colorado Dental Hygiene Association 2020
- Sunstar RDH Award of Distinction 2018
- Outstanding Contribution Award - Colorado Dental Hygiene Association 2018
- Outstanding Volunteer - Oral Cancer Foundation 2011
- Winner of Dentistry's Got Talent 2023

