

AMERICANS SPEAK OUT ON ORAL HEALTH RESEARCH

A Public Opinion Study for Research!America

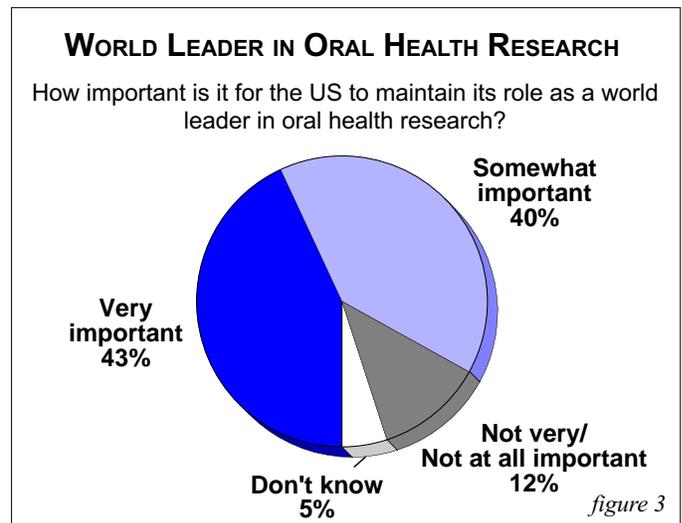
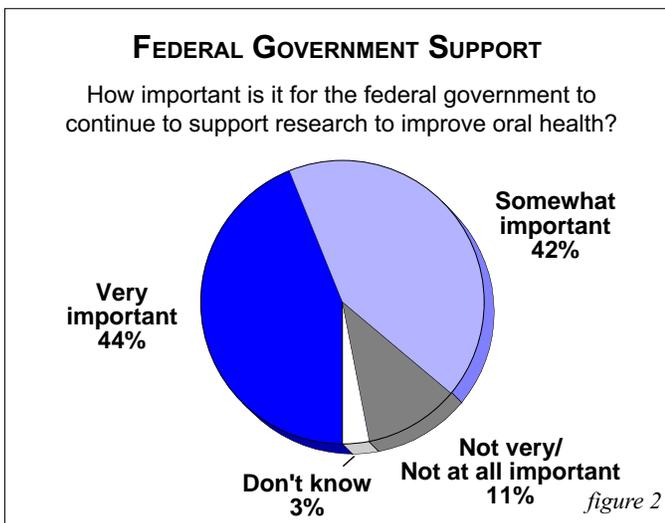
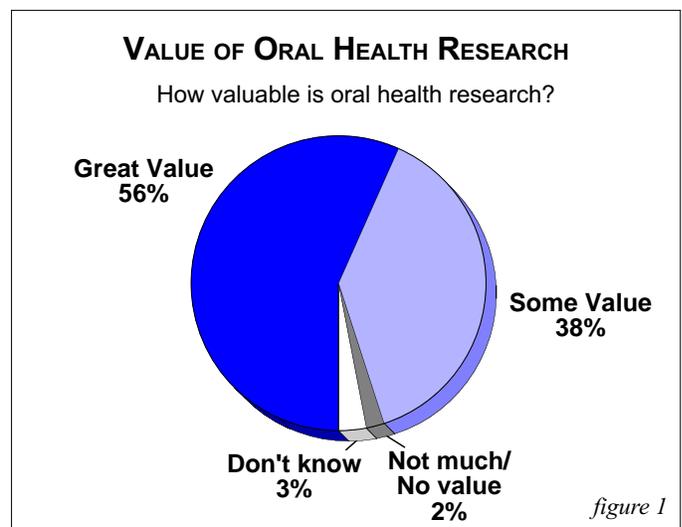
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Research!America has been gauging public opinion on people's attitudes toward medical, health and scientific research since 1992. Results of the recent national poll on oral health issues show a high level of support and value for oral health research. These poll responses indicate there is an overwhelming belief that oral health research is important and is a high priority.

ORAL HEALTH RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

Oral health research is clearly of value to Americans (see figure 1). In fact, 94% of the public says it is valuable, with 56% saying oral health research is of *great* value. Eighty-six percent of Americans say it is important for the federal government to continue to support research to improve oral health, and 44% say this is *very* important (see figure 2).

Similarly, 83% feel it is important that the United States maintains its role as a world leader in oral health research, and forty three percent of Americans feel this is *very* important (see figure 3). The public also favors a specific product of oral health research; two-thirds say they would prefer diagnostic saliva tests developed through oral health research over traditional blood tests, assuming the tests were equally accurate.



ORAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT TO OVERALL HEALTH

Nearly all Americans believe that oral health is important to their overall health (see figure 4). One-fifth say oral health is *somewhat* important, while 77% say it is *very* important to their overall health. While most Americans believe their teeth, gums, jaws, and mouth are healthy, just one third rate their oral health as excellent (see figure 5). A plurality of 44% say their oral health is good, while 15% say fair and 6% say poor.

Similarly, diagnostic questions find few Americans reporting recent oral health problems or concerns. Twelve percent of Americans have had painful aching in their teeth, mouth or jaws within the last month, while 87% report no such pain. Eight percent report feeling self-conscious or embarrassed during the last month because of their teeth, mouth, or jaws, while 92% have not. And just two percent have missed work, school, or social activities within the past month because of problems with their teeth, mouth or jaws.

MAJORITY RECEIVE REGULAR DENTAL CARE

Over three-quarters of Americans see their dental health practitioner regularly. Fifty-nine percent of Americans say they visit a dental health professional every six months, and another fifth have their dental checkup once a year. Eleven percent see their dental health professional only when there is a problem. Fifty-seven percent report having insurance that covers at least a portion of their dental services.

METHODOLOGY

Charlton Research Company conducted a telephone survey among 800 adults nationwide. The entire sample was proportionate to the country's demographics, including geography, gender, voter registration and ethnicity. The survey, fielded September 17-25, 2003, has a theoretical sampling error of +/-3.5%. Please note that much of the question text in this report has been paraphrased.

This poll was commissioned by Research!America, a not-for-profit, membership-supported national alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing public education and advocacy for medical, health, and scientific research. For more information about the Oral Health poll, including a list of sponsoring organizations, or for other questions about public attitudes towards scientific research, contact Research!America at: 1101 King Street, Suite 520, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 · Telephone: 703/739-2577 · Fax: 703/739-2372 · e-mail: info@researchamerica.org · www.researchamerica.org.

