By Robert Selleck
Managing Editor

Dental professionals across North America were featured prominently in the national news cycle throughout August after an Associated Press National Investigative Team article was released under headlines such as “Medical benefits of dental floss unproven.”

Local newspapers and other media outlets across the U.S. and Canada and internationally ran the article — or variations of it — many also including comments from their markets’ dental professionals to provide local perspective.

Major dental organizations released statements, too, including the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Periodontology and the American Dental Hygienists’ Association.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also weighed in, in response to a request from the ADA. The HHS was at the center of the story because the AP’s flossing references were triggered by a 2015 decision by the HHS to no longer include a recommendation for daily flossing in the latest U.S. Dietary Guidelines — in part because the rigor of available science was not as strong as the science backing other recommendations in the guidelines.

The AP team immediately saw the headline that would be of most interest, and flossing was suddenly sharing the mass-media stage with coverage of the U.S. presidential election and what the Kardashians were up to.

Virtually all of the commentary in response to the AP article confirmed that oral-health experts were adamantly still promoting the value of flossing — and that the change in dietary policy had more to do with the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee deciding to keep the policy narrowed on food and nutrient intake.

Still, there was broad agreement that large-scale, long-term scientific studies on interdental care would be beneficial. The AAP response stated: “Because the development of periodontal disease is slow in

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Media spotlight on flossing lets dental pros shine

Flossing is suddenly a hot topic seemingly everywhere, with newspaper front pages, radio programs, television news, media websites, bloggers and commenters engaged in a worldwide discussion.
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