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Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Jeff Haley • March 16, 2016

## EDITOR'S PEN

Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

### Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Jeff Haley

**President and Chief Scientist at OraHealth**

**Gary Barg:** I have spoken to so many caregivers whose loved ones are dealing with everything from dry mouth to ulcers, oral cancers, and wounds in their mouths, due to health challenges. You founded OraHealth in 2001 after practicing law for 20 years as one of Seattle's leading intellectual property attorneys. What I thought was also neat was that you also have a scientific background and you personally developed OraHealth products to help with mouth care. So I am intrigued, how did you come about developing these products?

**Jeff Haley:** Well I have been an inventor all of my life. I started inventing when I was about 12. When I realized that 20% of people suffer from canker sores, like I do, I wanted to develop a superior solution for canker sores. Nobody knows what causes canker sores and there are not any good remedies out there, at least nothing that is a real wiz-bang like antibiotics are for bacterial infections.

**Gary Barg:** So what makes your products at OraHealth so effective?

**Jeff Haley:** I invented technology for adhesion in the mouth, so ingredients could be released in the mouth from the adhering disc directly onto a sore or all throughout your mouths surface over time. Adhesion in the mouth is the most

important aspect for both the canker sore remedy called H-B12 Melts, which is at CVS, and for the dry mouth remedy called **XyliMelts**, which is at Rite-Aid and CVS.

**Gary Barg:** I am glad you brought up XyliMelts, because I really am quite intrigued with them. They work while you are sleeping. How is that?

**Jeff Haley:** A thin tablet, which we call is a disc, has an adhesive on one side that I discovered. The adhesive comes from the sap of the acacia tree in North Africa and is all-natural. Because it adheres, you can put it on the outside of a tooth or on the gums. Because it adheres strongly, it is safe to use while sleeping.

**Gary Barg:** That is really important because, if you do not have the ability to have the medication time release...

**Jeff Haley:** Absolutely, the time release is what it allows. Then, I had to develop the other side of the disc to achieve the time release of ingredients that are effective for dry mouth. I first worked on ingredients that are effective for mouth sores, and then I worked on ingredients that are effective for dry mouth.

**Gary Barg:** So what are people saying about your products? Obviously you are getting letters and comments.

**Jeff Haley:** People who have had head or neck radiation treatment love the product. They have dry mouth for the rest of their lives and once they discover it, they want to use it every night. Many of them also use it during the day. When you use it while sleeping, it lasts all night long. Once I had the adhering disc that slowly releases ingredients and I started working on dry mouth, I determined that the best ingredients to deliver are flavor because flavor stimulates saliva, xylitol because xylitol reduces tooth decay, and cellulose gum because it coats the mouth and holds moisture and keeps the moisture in your mouth so you do not swallow it all. So I put those into the disc to make XyliMelts.

**Gary Barg:** Health can really deteriorate due to dry mouth.

**Jeff Haley:** The two serious consequences of dry mouth that are even worse than how it feels. One is that it causes serious tooth decay and other gum disease. For the tooth decay you need to be using fluoride, but fluoride is not enough for people with dry mouth. We have lots of dentists tell us they used extra fluoride treatments and the patients mouth was still falling apart, and then they gave XyliMelts and their mouths stopped falling apart and started getting better.

**Gary Barg:** Challenges with your teeth can also lead to potential cardiovascular issues.

**Jeff Haley:** Yes, when the bacteria flourishes in your mouth, bacteria levels go up in your blood and when they go up in your blood, they cause heart and other problems. XyliMelts reduce bacteria in your mouth by two ways. When you have normal saliva flow, the saliva is constantly washing away the bacteria. When the saliva flow goes low, without that washing away, the bacteria builds up. By stimulating saliva via flavor, you get more of your own saliva flow, which keeps the bacteria counts lower. The other factor is the xylitol. Xylitol suppresses the bacteria that causes tooth decay and greatly reduces tooth decay. To do that it has to linger in your mouth, it does not do you any good if you swallow it.

**Gary Barg:** You are also a client of your own company. How does it work for your own mouth care issues?

**Jeff Haley:** I use the H-B12 Melt for my own canker sores. I was recently using sea sickness medicine for an ocean crossing, which gave me serious dry mouth and I felt awful. The XyliMelts product really addressed the problem and made my mouth feel much better. I use it both during the day and of course while sleeping.

**Gary Barg:** Has anything people have told you about how they use your products, surprised you?

**Jeff Haley:** It was actually a CPAP user who told me that it is good for use with a CPAP machine. Others have told me that they do not have dry mouth at all except for when they sleep on their back with their mouth open, and they started using XyliMelts and told me that it was great for that. Others started using it because they get dry mouth while lecturing and they put one in before each speech.

**Gary Barg:** What are people living with cancers telling you?

**Jeff Haley:** Often, the cancer treatment causes dry mouth, and they love this product and use it during the day and even while sleeping. Once the radiation treatment ends, the dry mouth continues for the rest of their lives. They are some of our most satisfied customers.

**Gary Barg:** It just seems to be a whole new way of thinking about supporting people with cuts, wounds, mouth issues, sores, and canker sores.

**Jeff Haley:** There are some people whose dry mouth is so severe, often times these are people with Sjogrens syndrome, that they can not use the XyliMelts because you have to have a little bit of saliva to start them dissolving to get out the flavor to stimulate more saliva. For those people we take the XyliMelts and pre-dissolve it in water and put it in a tube and supply people with tubes of gel. Then the gel they use to coat their mouths. The gel is cellulose gum plus xylitol plus water. We also put in hyaluronan, which is an ingredient we have in all of the cells in our body and are needed to speed healing of any wounds, cuts or ulcers in the mouth. That product is called XyliGel.

**Gary Barg:** I was wondering is if you have had any family caregiving situations that you wanted to share?

**Jeff Haley:** I was drawn to solving the problems of dry mouth because my mother died of cancer in the throat. She had radiation to the throat and terrible dry mouth from it. She died before I started working on inventing this product, so I was not able to help her with that problem.

**Gary Barg:** I think she would be quite proud of what you have accomplished.

**Jeff Haley:** I would like to think so.

**Gary Barg:** What is the one most important piece of advice that you would like to share with family caregivers.

**Jeff Haley:** Think about the importance of how the mouth feels, because that makes a big difference with how uncomfortable you are and how much pain you are in. When your mouth is feeling bad you are likely to get oral infections, you are likely to get gum disease, you are likely to lose all your teeth, and you are likely to get heart disease and other problems that come from having too much bacteria living in your mouth all of the time.

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