



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 14, 2010

CONTACT: Liz Rogers, (207) 756-2444
liz@oralhealthamerica.org

**THE HEALTH RISKS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO USE DESERVE
CONGRESSIONAL ATTENTION, ADVOCATES SAY**
**Oral Health America's NSTEP® Supports Hearing on Tobacco Addiction and
America's Pastime**

April 14, 2010, Chicago, IL—Oral Health America (OHA) participated in a congressional hearing today on the use of smokeless tobacco by young people, the effects it has on oral health, and the impact of its use by professional baseball players. The hearing, “Smokeless Tobacco: Impact on the Health of our Nation's Youth and Use in Major League Baseball,” was held by Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Health Subcommittee Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ). Speakers included OHA's former NSTEP® (National Spit Tobacco Education Program) Chairman, Joe Garagiola, and Gruen Von Behrens, an oral cancer survivor and member of the NSTEP speaker's bureau.

“I wish to thank the Committee for bringing this important, but overlooked health issue to the table. Smokeless tobacco is not harmless,” Mr. Von Behrens said at the hearing. “It has ruined my life.”

Mr. Von Behrens first started using smokeless tobacco at the age of 13 to fit in with his peers. As a high school baseball star at the age of 17, he was diagnosed with cancer and has since undergone 34 surgeries in the past 15 years. He now travels throughout the country and has shared his story with over 2 million young people, and collegiate and professional athletes.

OHA established the NSTEP program in 1994 to reduce the use of spit tobacco and help break baseball's association with it. NSTEP reaches up to 325,000 Little League players every year with its relationship with Little League Baseball and Softball and its presence at the Little League World Series each August.

“We applaud the committee's attention to this serious health issue today, and maintain our on-going commitment to providing educational outreach to young baseball and softball players throughout the country,” said Beth Truett, President and CEO, Oral Health America.

Oral Health America's mission is to change lives by connecting communities with resources to increase access to oral health care, education and advocacy for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. For more information, visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.