

Poster journal

Joining hands to nurture healthy smiles

Subhathira Rajasekaran¹, Sham S Bhat², Sundeep Hegde K³, Vidya Bhat⁴

¹⁻³Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry Yenepoya Dental College, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

⁴Department of Prosthodontics, Yenepoya Dental College, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

Commentary:

Early Childhood Caries (ECC) is a prevailing disease commonly seen in children younger than 5 years of age. There is a lack of vision on defining the problem, prevention and management strategies to be applied in the dental community¹. Nurses working in the newborn nursery, ambulatory care clinics, private offices, public health, and community programs are in a distinct position to bring about a beneficial change in the recent epidemic status of ECC. These changes can be accomplished by providing comprehensive oral health education with routine anticipatory guidance for parents. Parents are provided with the fundamental instructions regarding the feeding practices, bathing, care of the umbilical cord, recognition of signs of illness in newborns by the nurses regularly. A model set to provide knowledge and awareness about oral health care to the parents is the newborn nursery².

Nurses are in a notable position to positively reinforce the importance of oral health status to both the parents and the children. They provide assistance in acquiring access to prophylactic oral health care, specifically in low socio-economic populations³. Nurses who have the expertise of working in maternity and pediatric wards are in a favorable position to counsel the mothers expecting children on the child's oral hygiene requirements on a regular basis. Therefore, they have a crucial role in recognizing at-risk mothers or children during oral screening ensuring referral to pediatric dentists for dental treatment⁴.

Despite having knowledge about the importance of oral health prevention by nurses, they were oblivious of the guidelines required professionally for incorporating oral health in pediatric practices. Collaboration with dental schools and community services would provide a broader idea regarding oral health preventive measures. When administrative supports and policies have been followed, inter-professional collaboration is possible between health care teams. This would bring forth a unique platform allowing the child's oral health status to be monitored closely while providing a base for early interventions in the form of fluoride applications and early referrals to the dentist⁵. The pediatrician's involvement along with the nurses would hold more weight to the parents for their child's first appointment with a pediatric dentist as they already trust them. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach involving the nurse, pediatrician and pediatric dentist would play a pivotal role in maintaining good oral hygiene of children.

References

1. Hallas D, Fernandez J, Lim L, Carobene M. Nursing strategies to reduce the incidence of early childhood caries in culturally diverse populations. *Journal of pediatric nursing*. 2011 Jun 1;26(3):248-56.
2. Hagan JF, Shaw JS, Duncan P, American Academy of Pediatrics. *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. 2008. Published by American Academy of Pediatrics. 2010.
3. El Fadl RA, Blair M, Hassounah S. Integrating maternal and children's oral health promotion into nursing and midwifery practice-a systematic review. *PloS one*. 2016 Nov 23;11(11):e0166760.
4. DiMarco MA, Huff M, Kinion E, Kendra MA. The Pediatric nurse practitioner's role in reducing oral health disparities in homeless children. *Journal of Pediatric Health* 2009; 23(2):109-16.
5. Bernstein J, Gebel C, Vargas C, Geltman P, Walter A, Garcia R, Tinanoff N. Listening to paediatric primary care nurses: a qualitative study of the potential for interprofessional oral health practice in six federally qualified health centres in Massachusetts and Maryland. *BMJ open*. 2017 Mar 1;7(3):e014124.

Keywords: Early Childhood Caries; Child Oral Health ; Dental Treatment

How to cite this article: Rajasekaran S, Bhat SS, Hegde KS, Bhat V.- Joining hands to nurture healthy smiles PosterJ 2020; 9(1):4.

Source of support: Nil.

DOI: 10.15713/ins.dpj.026

Conflict of interest: None declared

Corresponding Author:

Subhathira Rajasekaran ,

Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry

Yenepoya Dental College, Mangalore, Karnataka,India

Email id: subhathira@gmail.com