Oral Care in Continuing Care Settings: Collaborating to Improve Policies and Practices

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Oral Care in Continuing Care Settings: Collaborating to Improve Policies and Practices

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**Project term:** 2008-2012

**Purpose:** To examine the integration of oral health care for frail and dependent older adults into a variety of continuing care settings in rural NS.

**Facilities:**
- The Birches Continuing Care Centre
- Braeside Nursing Home
- Duncan McMillan Nursing Home

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Why is this research important?

• Oral health care historically absent from health care discussions
• Canadians living longer & maintaining a greater percentage of natural teeth resulting in:
  • New patterns of disease
  • Greater challenges for oral care provision
• One third of people aged 80+ live in LTC
• Oral hygiene among older dependent adults is often poor
  • Residents often enter LTC with poor oral health
  • Limited access to professional services
• Mouth care is often inadequate for those who depend on others to provide their oral care
What did we do?

1. Collected Data:
   • Document review examining internal & external factors related to the provision of oral care in LTC settings
   • Focus groups with residents and care staff
   • Key informant interviews with relevant health professionals in LTC

2. Designed an oral care action plan based on data collection:
   
   Workshop topics included:
   • Planning and tracking of daily oral care for residents
   • Education & training needed to improve daily oral care delivery
   • Special supports needed for residents with dementia
   • Access to professional dental services
What did we do? (con’t)

3. Implemented the oral care action plan (over 1 yr)

4. Evaluated the process, outcomes & changes associated with the action plan:
   • Interviews, phone calls and email exchanges with Health Services Director, LTC facility site managers
   • Diary Study (x3) & Areas of Worklife Survey (x2)
   • Evaluations of education sessions
   • Oral care activities record
   • Coordinator field notes & Photos

5. Recommended revisions to organizational policies & practices based on findings
Components of the Oral Care Action Plan

**Oral care resource manual was developed:**
“Brushing Up On Mouth Care: An Oral Health Resource for Care Staff in LTC Settings”

**Oral Care Action plan includes:**
- Daily mouth care cards for residents
- Oral Care tool-kits for residents
- Fact sheets on various oral health topics
- Daily & Annual Oral Health Assessments
- Oral Care Planning tool
- Posters
- Oral Care Educational Videos
### Care Cards & Tool-kits

**Daily mouth-care Card for people with NATURAL TEETH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Instructions or comments:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Check mouth for abnormalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brush teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brush tongue from back to front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Floss or alternative (if possible)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rinse mouth with mouth rinse**/salt water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rinse toothbrush and store to air dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Record success on flow sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alternative to using floss include a proxabrush, oral rinse or gauze
**Avoid alcohol-based mouth rinses or rinse out the mouth

**Further details about personal oral care**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DATE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When toothbrush was last changed: __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Oral visit to dentist:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Required supplies:** toothbrush, toothpaste, mouth rinse (non-alcohol)

**Additional supplies:** if necessary: floss (OR proxabrush, floss handle, flossers), textured, tongue cleaner, lip lubricant, mouth props, gloves, gauze, kidney basin

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Factsheets

Dental Caries & Diet

How does dental decay occur?

- Plaque & bacteria + sugar or starch = an acidic environment. Starch & sugar are broken down by bacteria in the mouth (a natural bacteria that is always present). A by-product of this process is acid. The mouth goes from a basic or neutral environment to acidic environment each time food is consumed. This can soften the enamel of the teeth for 5-15 minutes each time food is consumed.

REDUCING THE RISK OF DECAY

- Brush daily with a fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride gel may be recommended when there is a high risk for cavities.
- Starchy foods (such as bread, cereal, pasta) are necessary for a healthy diet. Follow Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating to find healthy choices.
- Minimize the time teeth are exposed to starch & sugar by eating these foods with meals rather than snacking on them throughout the day.
- Substitute sugary snacks with sugar-free gum and mints (especially made with xylitol). This can also help reduce dental cavities by increasing the saliva flow.
- Drink high sugar beverages through a straw, then rinse mouth with water, and brush within 30mins.
- Rinsing with water or chewing sugarless gum helps cleanse the teeth after a snack.

If there was no SUGAR there would be no CAVITIES!

Labeling Dentures

Labeling can be done professionally or at home.

Do-it-yourself Denture Labeling:

- Denture labeling is important for identifying the patient’s dentures. Dentures can be easily misplaced at meals, while soaking or cleaning and other patient’s may think they are theirs and walk off with them. Patient’s can find it difficult to speak, eat or socialize without their dentures.
- Making new dentures is time consuming, expensive and the patients may not be able to tolerate the procedure to make or get use a new denture.

You will need:
1. Spray disinfectant
2. Emory board (nail file)
3. Indelible marker
4. CLEAR Acrylic nail polish

STEPS:
1) Always wear gloves
2) Clean and disinfect the denture
3) Use an emory board to roughen the cheek side of the denture at the back
4) Print the resident’s name on the area with a permanent marker and then seal it with clear acrylic nail polish
5) Once dry, clean and disinfect the denture again and rinse thoroughly with cool water

Other Options:
- Permanent labeling can be done at the denturist or the dentist office when the dentures are made.
- Dental professionals can label dentures with an engraving tool and apply acrylic over the top to make it permanent.
- Denture ID kits are available.

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**Daily Assessment Form**

**Daily Oral Health Assessment Sheet**

Please use the illustration below to record any problems observed when performing the resident’s daily oral care routine.

**Legend**

- **R** Red Patches
- **W** White Patches
- **L** Lumps, Bumps or Swelling
- **S** Sores
- **B** Bleeding
- **L** Loose/Broken Tooth

**Where to look**
- Tongue (sides and front)
  - Have resident stick out tongue
- Floor of the mouth (underneath the tongue)
  - Have resident lift tongue OR move with toothbrush
- Roof of the mouth (hard & soft palate)
  - Tilt resident’s head back slightly
- Cheeks
  - Pull cheek away from teeth
- Gums & Teeth
  - Fold top lip up and bottom lip down to assess gums
- Lips

**Please report any problems to the RN on duty**

**Date:**

**Resident Name:**

**Staff Name:**

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POSTERS

LOOK
for redness, white patches, sores or bleeding

FEEL
for tenderness, swelling, or loose/broken teeth

TELL
your supervisor if you notice anything unusual

Brushing Up on Mouth Care

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Oral Care in Continuing Care Settings: Collaborating to Improve Policies and Practices
In This Session We Will Review:

- The Importance of Oral Health
- Various Dental Diseases and How to Prevent Them
- Daily Oral Health Assessments
- Hands-on Resources for Daily Oral Care
  - Tool Kits
  - Care Cards
- The Role of the Care Provider (In delivering daily oral care)

In This Session We Will Review:

- Understanding Dementia
  1) What is dementia? (Prevalence, Types & Symptoms)
  2) The most common ‘losses’ of dementia (the 7As)
  3) Responsive behaviors
- Tips and Techniques for providing oral care

In This Session We Will Review:

- The Daily Oral Health Assessment Form
- Oral Health Assessment Tool (used for annual Oral Health Assessments)
- Oral Hygiene Care Planning Tool

In This Session We Will Review:

- Toothbrushes, Toothpaste and Brushing Technique
- Floss, Floss Alternatives, and Flossing Technique
- Mouth Rinses
- Denture Care Products & Cleaning Technique
- Other Oral Conditions and Products
Oral Care Action Plan:
- Toolkits, care cards, education

**CARE PROVIDERS**
- Increased awareness of oral care
- Having supplies on hand helped with delivery of oral care

**MANAGERS/ADMIN**
- ORAL CARE CHAMPION

**Concern:**
Structure will be lost when research project ends
Next Steps

1. Guiding principles for LTC facilities
2. Share findings
3. Adapt resources for other audiences
4. Research
Acknowledgements

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- Sandi Berwick  Capital District Health Authority

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