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Literature Abstract

Retained asymptomatic third molars and risk for second molar pathology

This cross-sectional and longitudinal study investigated the association of retained asymptomatic third molars with risk of adjacent second molar pathology (eg, caries and/or periodontitis) based on third molar status (ie, absent, erupted, or unerupted). Data of distal caries, distal alveolar bone loss $\geq 20\%$, and distal probing depth > 4 mm from 416 adult US men were selected from an observational cohort study. Compared to second molars adjacent to absent third molars, results showed the following: (1) those second molars adjacent to erupted third molars were more likely to have distal caries, (2) those second molars adjacent to soft tissue impacted third molars were more likely to have distal bone loss $\geq 20\%$ and distal probing depth > 4 mm, (3) and those second molars adjacent to bony impacted third molars were more likely to have distal bone loss $\geq 20\%$. In an analysis conducted using incidence of any one of the three disease outcomes in adjacent second molars, those that were adjacent to soft tissue impacted third molars were at highest risk as well as eventual tooth loss, followed by those adjacent to bony impacted or erupted third molars. The authors concluded that the retention of third molars is associated with increased risk of second molar pathology in middle-aged and older adult men.

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