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Abstract of the Scientific Literature

Assessing the Impact of Oral Health on the Life Quality of Children

Dental caries remains one of the most prevalent diseases of childhood, despite efforts to improve prevention and treatment. While the measurement of oral disease and conditions as they exist in children is clinically important, this paper suggests that these parameters should not be used to indicate the overall oral health of children. Oral health has been described as the standard of health of the oral and related tissues that contribute to the general well-being of an individual. Equating treatment needs with oral health may be an oversimplification of the concept. Currently, there are very few techniques designed to comprehensively assess the physical, social, and psychological effects of oral health and oral health-related quality-of-life issues. This paper outlines the value of and need for assessing child oral health-related quality of life (COHQoL) with various instruments. This may be important, since quality-of-life assessments can reflect children's feelings about their oral health and can be used to improve communication between patients, parents, and dental care providers. These assessments can also be used to plan oral health policy and care prioritization. Finally, COHQoL assessment can be used to develop guidelines for evidence-based practice. The development of useful assessment tools will be complicated and challenging, but a number of international studies have begun developing such measures. As the field of COHQoL expands, several measures will be available for use. It will be important, however, to evaluate the instruments and make sure they are appropriate to serve their purposes.

Comment: This paper proposes interesting insight into oral health assessments. It may be advantageous to consider the "whole child" when developing policies and evidence-based care programs. **BB**

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McGrath C, Broder H, Wilson-Genderson M. Assessing the impact of oral health on the life quality of children: Implications for research and practice. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol.* 2004;32:81-85. 56 references Copyright of Pediatric Dentistry is the property of American Society of Dentistry for Children and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.