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Abstract of the Scientific Literature

Factors Related to Severe Untreated Decay in Adolescents

The purposes of this study were to identify risk factors that discriminate between adolescents with high levels of tooth decay who receive dental treatment with those who do not receive dental treatment, and to gain information to motivate avoidant adolescents with serious dental needs. The study population included all 439 students 12 to 20 years old enrolled in a southern Washington state school district. A subset of children with DMFT of 5 or more was surveyed and divided into a case group (18 children with severe involvement) and a control group (22 children). The survey included questions in 4 areas: (1) structure (eg, gender, race); (2) history (eg, past dental experience); (3) cognition (eg, fear surveys); and (4) expectation. The following variables were related to the dependent variable: (1) perceived poor personal dental health; (2) perceived poor mother's dental health; (3) negative beliefs about the dentist; (4) not planning to go to the dentist even if having severe problems; (5) not being in any club or playing on a sports team; and (6) not having a best friend. This study shows the relevance of the history and cognition variables in understanding the presence of extensive tooth decay in rural adolescents.

Comments: Information on dentistry for adolescents is limited. Studies like the aforementioned give practitioners useful information about the factors that may be related to dental disease in this age group. Dentists should encourage research in this area to better understand the factors related to adolescent dental problems and how practitioners can prevent them. **JLC**

Address correspondence to Dr. Erik Skaret, Center for Odontophobia, Faculty of Odontology, Aarstadveien 17, N-5009 Bergen (Norway).

Skaret E, Weinstein P, Milgrom P, Kaako T, Getz T. Factors related to severe untreated tooth decay in rural adolescents: a case control study for public health planning. Int J Paediatr Dent 2004;14:17-26.

41 references

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