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Abstract of the Scientific Literature

Evaluating the impact of a Prenatal Dental Public Health Program

This paper describes findings from an evaluation of a prenatal dental public health program providing limited clinical care along with oral health education to pregnant women at increased risk for negative birth outcomes. Women are referred for these dental services from the Healthiest Babies Possible program serving low-income women at high-risk for preterm and low-birth-weight pregnancies. Referral is based upon women self-reporting a dental problem or if they have not seen a dentist in > 2 years. A one year evaluation was undertaken to assess the effects of the oral health counselling and periodontal care provided. Participants completed questionnaires, interviews, and clinical assessments during the different phases of the project. Visits 1 and 2 were during pregnancy, while visit 3 was postnatal. A total of 61 women were enrolled with a mean age of 27.7 years at an average of 22.8 weeks gestation. Gingival health improved significantly between visit 1 and 2 in all parameters like plaque, calculus, bleeding on probing, and mean pocket depth (P<.01). These clinical improvements in periodontal health knowledge also improved after completing this study. Significantly more women believed that gingival bleeding during pregnancy is not normal (P<.001) and that baby's should not go to sleep with a bottle (P=.019). Further, 93% reported that they had begun to provide infant oral care for their newborn, and dental care for their other children significantly increased after taking part in this project (P<.001). Overall, participants found the oral health information useful and appreciated the fact that it was provided verbally from the dental hygienist rather than via a pamphlet.

Comments: This program provides simple and relatively low-cost examples on how to improve access to clinical care and counselling for high-needs pregnant women by dedicating time in the clinical schedule to accommodate referrals from the local prenatal support program. Such strategies could easily be adopted by other dental public health clinics that want to improve the oral health of women, their infants, and their other children. Such programs may improve family oral health for high-risk groups and may also reduce the dental disease burden among their children. **RJS**

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Abstract of the Scientific Literature

Using numeric pain scores with children: What do they really mean?

The purpose of this study was to determine how self reported pain score measurements by children are interpreted for clinical meaning. This observational, prospective study evaluated the relationship between a 0 (no pain) -10 (most pain) numeric rating scale for pain and the child's perceived need for medication (PNM); their preception of feeling better or pain relief (PR); and their perceived satisfaction with pain management (PS) in an operative setting. The study received IRB approval by the University of Michgan with assent and consent forms signed by children participants and their parents. One hundred thirteen children aged 7-16 years old were in the study and 397 observations were recorded. These observations included 86 two pair sets and 19 unpaired in 10 and 1 pair in 17 cases. Each child was undergoing surgery, presenting with post operative pain. Included in the study were children who spoke English and who passed tests confirming their ability to self report post operative pain. The children used patient controlled anesthesia (PCA) and were observed for data independent of their caretakers after at least one hour of being awake. Observations were done in the first 24 hours after surgery by trained research personnel, who were blinded to clinical interventions between their observations, the children where asked to score their pain from 0-10 NRS, rate their PMN and their PS. Assessments were repeated every 2 hours. Only 1 paired observation was recorded the day of surgery. Parents were not included in the child's data observation. Data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software, and applicable statistical analyses were used resulting in P values of <0.0125 as significant. To determine if the relationships between pain scores and other measures could be modified, gender, age and previous surgeries were considered. Pain scores for perceived need (PNM) were significantly higher than the "no need" group. Pain scores associated with perceived feeling better (PS) was significantly lower for children with NRS<5. For age, gender and previous surgeries, female children with a history of previous surgeries reported somewhat or very satisfied at higher pain scores. Numerical rating scales are generally reliable in reflecting children's level of pain associated with perceived need for medication, pain relief and perceived satisfaction with pain management.

Comment: According to this study a 0-10 numeric rating scale can be a reliable tool for evaluating pain in children. As pediatric dentists, much of what we do may provoke post –op pain in child patients. It may be worthwhile to add age appropriate pre- and post –op pain scores to our standard progress note records. **JG**

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