

MAPHM Symposium 2017

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Abstract Title:

Perceived vs Actual Oral Health status of Maltese School Children

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Abstract

Background

Dental caries and early stages of periodontal diseases are often symptom free, giving an incorrect perception of good oral health to the individual. This could result in the individual not recognising the need to attend for dental treatment until it might possibly be too late. Results from previous studies show that the majority of children attend at the dentist's occasionally or when in pain. Early childhood caries is generally an indication that the child will eventually have poor oral health in adulthood. This often results in the need for more complex and expensive treatment and could result in premature tooth loss (the tooth loss cycle). This in turn results in the need for prosthesis, which although replacing teeth aesthetically, present with loss of masticatory function, which is a basic requirement for overall general health. There are no studies on the topic in Malta.

Methods

The study involves screening of 3,5,8,12 and 15 year old school children who were randomly selected using a stratified sampling method. All types of schools were involved in the study and all children with a positive consent form were included in the study. 12 and 15 year old participants were given a self administered questionnaire, while 3,5 and 8 year old participants were given a questionnaire to be completed by their parent/guardian. The children were screened using standardised conditions by trained examiners.

Results

The results are currently being analysed, and will be available by August 2017. The results will indicate where the limited resources need to be allocated with respect to oral health.

Conclusions

The conclusions will highlight whether there is a need for more knowledge of routine dental checkups and about the disease processes affecting oral health. This will help in preventing progression of diseases, which could result in worsened oral health which has an impact on the quality of life of the individual.

If perception matches the actual status, it will help reduce the expenditure on treatment of oral diseases, allowing for more sustainability of the oral health care system and long term better quality of life for the individual, allowing today's children to enter old age with a functional dentition.



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Messages:

Sustainability of the oral health care system and less treatment need

Oral Health related Quality of Life