

Oral health of the elderly in canada research paper sample

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



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\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

1. [Abstract](#) \n \t
2. [Introduction](#) \n \t
3. [Oral Health Issues of the Elderly](#) \n \t
4. [Status of Dental Service in Canada](#) \n \t
5. [Income Disparity](#) \n \t
6. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
7. [References](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Abstract

Oral health is an important aspect in the person's overall health and hygiene. However, most elderly people are not getting adequate oral health care. The purpose of this paper is to examine the dental health status of seniors in Canada. It aims to identify the health risks associated with poor oral health among the elderly as well as to identify the disparities among other age groups especially on the younger and employed population of Canada. Underlying the investigation is the primary interest of this study which is to determine whether seniors in Canada are getting adequate oral health care as well as the key areas of improvement to make older people regularly visit the dentist.

Introduction

Canada is among the most developed countries in the world yet despite the high quality of life, oral health is still a persistent problem among its elderly population. As a group, seniors or those individuals aged 65 and above, are stereotyped as negligent in oral care. Evidently, most old people overlook their oral health, which adversely impacts their over-all health. In a study of the 442 institutionalized elderly in Edinburgh, Scotland, for example, it showed that “ 65% of the sample wearing dentures had visible soft debris, calculus, and stains that would not wash off; 53% had denture-induced pathology requiring treatment about which staff were unaware”. It implies then that most elderly people have disregarded their oral health for some reason. With Canada in focus, this paper would like to explore if elderly people are getting adequate dental care. The significance of studying the elderly population of Canada is the fact that it reflects the behavioral orientation of seniors in most developed countries. Also, by knowing the factors and reasons why Canadian seniors are not getting adequate dental care, a recommendation can be drawn in order to improve their oral health status.

Oral Health Issues of the Elderly

Oral health professionals believe that poor oral hygiene can have detrimental effects to the psychosocial and systemic health of the elderly. Apparently, several health issues are associated with poor oral health common to most seniors. Among the common oral health problems for seniors are darkened teeth, dry mouth, diminished sense of taste, root decay, gum disease, tooth

loss, uneven jawbone, denture-induced stomatitis and thrush. However, one of the culprit as to why elderly people are getting oral health problems is because of their deteriorated lifestyle, which can be traced to excessive use of alcohol, cigarette smoking and lack of exercise. In Canada, oral health must not be taken lightly for aside from its immediate effects, there are underlying impacts to the country as a whole. One particular example is the loss of productivity. Accordingly, it was found that 4. 15 million working days are lost annually because of dental problems while 2. 26 million school days are lost for students that suffer from dental issues . Unfortunately, some seniors get the notion that the need for oral hygiene is not as important anymore as you come to age. However, it should be noted that oral health could not be dismissed as a minor issue. As observed by Laronde, Hislop, Elwood and Rosin, oral cancer, an integral disease caused by poor oral hygiene has alarmingly been identified to have more cases in Canada compared to cervical and ovarian cancer and seniors are at higher risk of acquiring the disease . Poor oral hygiene also leads to other major health issues. Bacteria in the mouth, for example, when not checked can get into the bloodstream that may cause heart diseases. Among the major illness caused by poor oral hygiene that affects most old persons are Dementia, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Pneumonia, Pancreatic cancer and respiratory infections .

Status of Dental Service in Canada

One of the primary reasons why seniors in Canada are not getting adequate oral health is because the country is in short supply of oral health

practitioners. In a study conducted by the Canadian Dental Association, it appears that in 2010, there are only 19, 563 licensed dentists in Canada wherein 54% of these numbers are in private practice and 19% are associates while only 1% works in public health. It is also interesting to note that there is more male dentist in Canada as compared to females while 18% of the dentists' populations of Canada are above 60 years old. There is a wide disparity regarding the distribution of dental service in Canada. Accordingly most of the dentists are working on urban areas as compared to the rural areas. In all areas combined, there are only one dentist per 1, 734 individuals although the distribution of dentists in rural areas is despairingly one for every 5, 096 people. Another drawback in Canadian oral health is the fact that oral health services is also not included the national Canada Health Act. Accordingly, most Canadians are getting dental services through the use of their individual health insurance or from out-of- pocket spending. According to Canadian Health Measures Survey, more than percent of persons aged 60 and above does not have any dental insurance which accounts to why most elderly are not getting adequate oral health care.

Income Disparity

Recommendation

One of the major drawbacks to oral health care of the elderly in Canada is its affordability and accessibility. Under affordability, seniors with low income would be harder to convince to spend some of their meager earning on oral health care since in poor individuals; oral health is of least concern. Under accessibility, it is obvious that there are only few oral health providers and

most of them are private practitioners. Apparently, the concentration of dentists in Canada is quite scarce that most of their services are not easily accessible especially in rural areas. It is recommended then that oral health for the elderly should be subsidized by the Canadian government. One way of doing so is by increasing the pension of the seniors to provide for their oral health care or the government can promote a legislation that would give substantial discounts to seniors on their oral care. It is also recommended that public oral health clinics should be increased in numbers as well as the number of dentists that works for the government. The Canadian government should also focus on rural areas as most seniors in these areas are unaware of the dangers of poor oral health. An information campaign can be conducted to emphasize the need for oral hygiene; citing the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.

Conclusion

The senior population in Canada is one of the most distinctive groups among the country's population. However, it appears that they are at risk of having health issues because of the poor oral hygiene and the overall oral health status in Canada. As determined in this study, the poor oral health care of the elderly in Canada is due in part to their behavioral orientation as well as government lapses. Apparently, most elderly people are either neglecting their oral health or they cannot afford basic health services because of their financial status. Even so, in their fragile health, oral hygiene is essential in maintaining a well-balanced health regimen for seniors in Canada. For the same reason, the government of Canada should help its senior citizens get

adequate oral health insurance policy by initiating programs that aims to improve Canada's public oral health facilities and manpower. Obviously, the golden years should not be spent combating the dreadful diseases that might be brought upon by poor oral hygiene but rather enjoyed with friends and family.

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