



Oral Health Education Programmes for School Going Children in India: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Oral diseases are one of the most common diseases found in humans which lead to serious problems such as pain and discomfort leading to loss of functionality, impairment and handicap. Many research has found that poor dental health can be mirror of serious medical conditions such as diabetes, pneumonia, and stroke. Being so much of prime importance, oral health is neglected in most of countries. Children are especially at higher risk for being in the group of neglect in case of treatment of oral diseases is considered. To overcome this situation in our country, various oral health care programs have been implemented by the government for the children at various levels like community-level, Anganwadi and school-level which includes mid-day meal scheme, fluoride programs, tooth brushing programs, nutrition programs, health-promoting schools, tobacco-free schools, and oral health care program for special children like special smiles project.

This review article highlights various oral health care programs for children in India.

Keywords: Oral Health, Brushing, Nutrition, Dental Caries.

Introduction

Oral health is the most integral part of general health of body. Oral hygiene determines oral health status. Poor oral hygiene can be origin of many diseases. General health cannot be attained or maintained without oral health. The mouth is regarded as the mirror of the body¹. Maintenance of the good oral hygiene can prevent the various dental problems and can lead to healthy life.

Oral health is linked to happiness and good general health and there is evidence that aesthetically acceptable and functionally adequate dentitions affect self-esteem, confidence and socialization.²

Accumulation of several bacteria's like Streptococcus mutants, diet, oral hygiene and duration play an important role in carious lesion. Dental caries is a

multifactorial disease in which several risk factors are involved and it occurs because of the imbalance that is created in oral environment and association of other external factors. Dental caries is one of the oldest diseases since mankind. Dental caries is highly prevalent in developing nations like India.

The world health organization (WHO) recognizes dental caries as a pandemic and reports that the prevalence of dental caries among school aged children is 60 to 90%.³ In several industrialized countries the prevalence and severity of dental caries have declined substantially because of preventive oral health care programs and changes in living conditions and lifestyles⁴.

There is a need to think beyond the surgical approach of managing oral disease and incorporate the concept of primary oral care right from the beginning for the children. Oral health issues are most emerging concerns for India. It is estimated that about 50% of school children are suffering from dental caries and more than 90% of the adult population is affected by periodontal disease⁵.

Children with poor oral health are 12 times more likely to have more restricted-activity days than those who do not. More than 50 million hours annually are lost from school due to oral diseases. Most of the oral diseases or conditions in children are preventable or treatable. It is essential for the youth to gain knowledge and skills to attain and maintain good health, including oral health. So it is necessary for promoting oral health in schools.

To overcome these problems Indian government has implemented several programs and policies to provide good oral health and provide education towards its maintenance.

National Oral Health Policy

In 1984, an oral health care national workshop were organized in Bombay while in the year 1986, by the

Indian Dental Association the oral health policy was conscripted. Dental Council of India (DCI) formulated the National Oral Health Policy. In the meantime WHO also took an importance step for promotion of dental health by spreading the message to all “oral health for healthy life” in the year 1994. The main aim of NOHP is to enhance the overall health of all Indians through the development and effective programs for the oral health promotion and prevention of the diseases by effective dental practices and programs⁶.

Community Level Programs

WHO has incorporated the essential oral healthcare services into the primary healthcare system which can provide the benefit lower class people and deprived populations. The who programs is very much beneficial for countries like India where ratio of the dentist and population is very unfavorable. Through the various awareness workshops for the community workers like junior public health nurses of health services and Anganwadi workers (AWWs) of ICDSs the oral health education is provided so that they spread the oral health awareness among the needy people.⁷

School Level Programs

A school dental health program must incorporate the teaching of the basic oral health care instructions to the children. IDA started its national school dental health education programme at Kundan Vidya Mandir senior secondary school. Under this programme, various schools provided education regarding dental ailments, prevention and treatment. As part of the programme, about 40,000 children were benefited from the initiative as they are not only provided dental care education but there dental examination was carried out alongwith needful treatments.

The main focus of the programme is to provide the preventive, treatment and health educational components.

Through a comprehensive approach it's the aim of the programme to prevent the disease before its onset and to achieve optimum oral health to the maximum number of children .

A. "Neev" School Oral Health Program

"Neev" was started by the Govt. of NCT of Delhi in the Government Schools as a pilot program to assist the dental health of the children . The Dental Team along with a Mobile Dental Clinic plan the whole project that how they would cover all the schools in a year.

The main intention is to

- Promotion of the oral health through Education aids and organization of the dental checkup camps for the Screening of the children.
- Providing the Primary and Secondary treatment needs through Mobile Dental Clinic in the Schools.
- And for the advance care and treatments the children were referred to the Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences⁸.

B. Dente-Nova Spreading smiles

This project is an effort to bring out oral health awareness among the community by a team which consists of the well trained undergraduates. The project has covered various districts of the Andhra Pradesh including - Hyderabad, Chilkur, Nalgonda. The primary focus of the project is to raise the standards of oral hygiene and prevention of the development of dental problems in under-privileged areas by organising free dental check-ups, sessions regarding awareness of dental health and treatment plan and preventive measures to the patients are provided. This project maintains a complete information regarding the oral health status and treatment needs of the patients.

Real India on Wheels

This is often an ongoing project which consists of an All India Oral Health Survey providing whatever treatment is

possible in co-ordination with various schools and dentists across India. The first phase has been successfully attained by Dr Rathore and 2nd phase is in progression. He's aiming to cover all the 28 districts and 7 union territories across india and has many newspapers supporting and backing him. He has been uploading his various camps and his journey on facebook, and his mobile dental van is being autotracked using gprs.

C. Colgate's "Young India" Bright Smiles, Bright Futures School Dental Health Education Program

A synergistic effort of IDA and Colgate - Palmolive , which was started in 1976 to provide the dental health education to children. One campaign for college oral health promotion was launched in Agra, 2001. The program is specially designed to assist educate school-going children about the basic rules of oral care using professional dentists. the youngsters were taught good oral hygiene habits, the proper techniques of brushing with the use of a tooth model and a toothbrush the importance of night brushing. The educative module consists of distribution of "Dental Health Pack" and training sessions for of teachers to incorporate good oral health practices. The program so far has covered 145+ million children in urban and rural India until December 2017.

D. (Chacha Nehru Sehat Yojna) School Health Scheme - Government of Delhi

Directorate of Health Services, Government of Delhi, started SHS in 1979 with six school health clinics, initially, to supply comprehensive health-care services to the school going children. This health scheme was started during the 7th five-year plan, and 64 school clinics were inaugurated. Regular screening programs were organised to look after the oral health which is governed by by two government hospitals, namely Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences and DDU hospital .¹⁰

Anganwadi Programmes

A training program was initiated by IDA under the “Bright Smiles Bright Futures” for Anganwadi workers. The basic oral health care education was provided to children from the depressed class of society through various Anganwadi – institutions. The main aim was to target the children along with their parents as the education which was being provided to the children were passed on to their parents also regarding the dental health. The training to Anganwadi Workers was provided by a qualified dentist being appointed by the IDA, to infuse essential oral care habits in children. This programme is promoted by Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited.

Oral Health Care Programs for Special Children

The special children are classified as those children who have a certain disability that limit them to perform daily life activities. Moreover, providing dental care for children with developmental disabilities is very complicated as it is not only cost productive but it takes lot of time also. A cross-sectional study conducted by Prasad et al¹¹ in special schools in Delhi to check the oral health status of special children have suggested that: school dental health programs should be undertaken in such institutions. Many health insurance scheme has been initiated by the Government of India such as: Disha, Vikaas, Samarth, Swavlamban and Nirmaya scheme out of which the last two are exclusively for the below poverty line differently abled children.¹²

Smile Train India Project

Smile Train is an initiative by the international children’s charity which provides 100%-free cleft repair surgery and comprehensive cleft care for affected children globally. The model of Smile Train projects includes local trained professionals which provide the required treatment in their communities. In India in last five years

more than 250 cleft surgeons along with 160 associated hospitals operate upon over 50 000 patients annually and since last nine years the data says more than 200 000 cleft patients received free treatment in India alone.¹³

Conclusion

The main conclusion derived is that the basic oral health education can provide an improvement in the oral hygiene practices among the school children. The school health policy should be used to promote oral health by provision of oral health instructions and education on harmful dietary practices. Preventive practices, such as regular dental checkups should be advocated and promoted in schools. If dental health awareness can be instituted to the parents, including brushing techniques and diet counseling at a very early age, the incidence of dental caries can be kept to minimum, and can reduce the probability of complicated dental treatment needs. However, an effective dental health education method has not been well instituted for visually impaired children.

Therefore, the importance of a preventive approach and the critical role of the dentist in providing proper dental education to parents of individuals with disabilities school-based oral health awareness and education programs are a necessity to improve the oral health and overall health of children and communities.

Furthermore, national oral health behavior data are needed for a national level of planning and an evaluation of health promotion programs. Parent’s education must be included in any program that promotes preventive oral care in schools as well as in other oral health educational programs aimed at general public.

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