A Healthy Smile Never Gets Old

A California Report on the Oral Health of Older Adults
BACKGROUND
Background

- Growing population of older adults in the US and California
- Poverty and health disparities precipitate health and well-being of many older adults in CA
- High need for oral health care among community-dwelling older adults (BRFSS)
- Unique needs among institutionalized older adults (residing in long-term care facilities and SNFs)
Background

- Older adults experience unique oral health care needs
- Poor oral health undermines overall health and well-being
  - Diabetes and glycemic control
  - Other chronic conditions - e.g. hypertension, CHD
  - Malnutrition, hunger
  - Acute exacerbation of conditions like aspiration pneumonia
  - Other
Background

- Better oral health will bring cost savings

- Improved data and accountability will help improve care and health outcomes
STUDY METHODOLOGY
Basic Screening Survey

• BSS of Older Adults
• Developed by ASTDD (Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors)
• Non-invasive open-mouth survey
• Research vs public health surveillance - “Screenings”
Study Methodology

- Advisory committee and ASTDD guidelines
- Study sample -
  - Skilled Nursing/ LTC Facilities (n = 36, State-rep.)
  - Community-dwelling Seniors (Convenience sample)
- Survey Instrument and protocol development
- Site recruitment and staff training/ calibration
Study Methodology

• Consents (Combination of implied and active)

• Screening protocols

• Study limitations
### California Elder Smiles – Screening Form

#### SITE INFORMATION
- **Site ID Code**
- **Screening Date**
- **Screener ID**

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
- **Age**
- **Gender**
  - MALE
  - FEMALE
- **Race/ Ethnicity**
  - 1 = White
  - 2 = Black
  - 3 = Hispanic
  - 4 = Asian
  - 5 = AI/ AN
  - 6 = Pacific Islander
  - 7 = Multi-racial
  - 9 = Unknown

#### ORAL SCREENING INFORMATION
- **Do you have a removable upper denture?**
  - No
  - Yes
- **Do you usually wear your upper denture when you eat?**
  - No
  - Yes

- **Do you have a removable lower denture?**
  - No
  - Yes
- **Do you usually wear your lower denture when you eat?**
  - No
  - Yes

- **Functional Posterior Occlusal Contacts (Assess with removable dentures in place)**
  - None
  - One side only
  - Both sides

- **Ask participant to remove partial/ full dentures**
  - Substantial Oral Debris
    - No
    - Yes
  - Edentulous
    - No
    - Yes
  - Severe Gingival Inflammation
    - No
    - Yes

- **Ask participant to remove partial/ full dentures**
  - Number of Upper Natural Teeth
    - Range: 0 to 16 (Include root fragments)
  - Number of Lower Natural Teeth
    - Range: 0 to 16 (Include root fragments)
  - Number of Teeth with Untreated Decay
  - Number of Teeth with Root Fragments
  - Number of Teeth with Obvious Mobility
    - Range: 0 to 16 (Include root fragments)
  - Need for Periodontal Care
    - No
    - Yes
    - Edentulous
  - Severe Dry Mouth
    - No
    - Yes
  - Suspicious Soft Tissue Lesion
    - No
    - Yes

- **Treatment Urgency**
  - No Obvious Problem (next scheduled visit)
  - Early Care (within next several weeks)
  - Urgent Care (within next week – pain/infection)

#### Comments:

**DO NOT LEAVE ANY FIELD BLANK**
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS
# Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>SENIORS SCREENED - N (Weighted %)</th>
<th>SENIORS SCREENED - N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES (n = 36)</td>
<td>COMMUNITY SITES (n = 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SCREENED</strong></td>
<td>1,193</td>
<td>1,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 75 years</td>
<td>370 (25.2%)</td>
<td>577 (48.9 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 to 85 years</td>
<td>398 (34.2%)</td>
<td>383 (32.5 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 85 years</td>
<td>392 (40.1%)</td>
<td>205 (17.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/ missing</td>
<td>33 (0.5%)</td>
<td>14 (0.01 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>412 (29.3%)</td>
<td>410 (34.9 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>774 (70.7%)</td>
<td>766 (65.1 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/ missing</td>
<td>7 (0.01%)</td>
<td>3 (0.001%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE/ ETHNICITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>640 (68.8%)</td>
<td>291 (24.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>93 (4.9%)</td>
<td>75 (6.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>194 (10.5 %)</td>
<td>397 (33.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>191 (13.2 %)</td>
<td>384 (32.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/ missing</td>
<td>75 (2.6%)</td>
<td>32 (2.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>152 (48.5 %)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1041 (51.5 %)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY FINDINGS
ORGANIZATION OF FINDINGS

• Skilled Nursing Home Residents (Statewide, representative sample)

• Community-dwelling older adults (Statewide, convenience sample)
KEY FINDING # 1

Large percentage of older adults suffer from untreated dental decay.
Key Finding # 1: Skilled Nursing Residents

- Nearly half the older adults residing in skilled nursing facilities have untreated tooth decay.

- The rate of untreated tooth decay was highest among adults aged 85 years and older.
Key Finding # 1: Community-Dwelling

- More than one in three older adults suffer from untreated tooth decay
- Nearly 20% of the older adults screened, had one or more decayed root fragments in their mouth.
KEY FINDING # 2

Untreated tooth decay is leading to a high prevalence of tooth loss in older adults in California.
Key Finding # 2: Skilled Nursing Residents

• More than one in three older adults in California’s skilled nursing facilities have lost all their teeth

TOOTH LOSS AS MEASURED BY THE NUMBER OF REMAINING NATURAL TEETH
CA Skilled Nursing Home Residents (65 years and older)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No natural teeth</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 6 natural teeth</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 natural teeth</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Finding # 2: Community-Dwelling

- Eighteen percent (18%) of the community dwelling older adults screened, have lost all their natural teeth, most of them due to tooth decay.
KEY FINDING # 3

Many older adults in California suffer from inability to chew due to poor contact between teeth.
Key Finding # 3: Skilled Nursing Residents

- Nearly 40% of SNF residents cannot chew because they do not have a functional contact between their upper and lower back teeth on either side of their mouth.

- Thirty-six percent (36%) of the older adults with total tooth loss did not have any dentures.
Key Finding #3: Community-Dwelling

- Nearly 18% of the community-dwelling older adults cannot chew due to lack of a functional contact between their upper and lower back teeth.

- Eighteen percent (18%) of the older adults with total tooth loss did not have any dentures.
KEY FINDING # 4

Majority of older adults need treatment for tooth decay and/or gum diseases.
Key Finding # 4: Skilled Nursing Residents

• More than one in three older adults need gum (gingival or periodontal) treatment immediately.
Key Finding # 4: Skilled Nursing Residents

- Nearly one out of three (27%) older adult needs treatment for a decayed tooth immediately or within 2 to 4 weeks.
Key Finding # 4: Community-Dwelling

- Forty-six percent (46%) of older adults screened, need treatment for tooth decay and or periodontal treatment
Key Finding # 4: Community-Dwelling

• One out of three (32.7%) older adult needs treatment for a decayed tooth immediately or within 2 to 4 weeks

Need for Early or Immediate Dental Treatment for Tooth Decay (Excluding Need for Periodontal or Gum Care) CA Community-Dwelling Older Adults (65 years and older)

- 67.4% No obvious problem
- 28.0% Early care needed
- 4.7% Urgent care needed
KEY FINDING # 5

Older adults residing in rural areas are worse off than their urban counterparts
Key Finding # 3: Community-Dwelling

- Older adults residing in nursing homes located in rural counties are nearly 10% more likely to have untreated tooth decay than their urban counterparts.

- Older adults living in rural counties who have lost all their natural teeth are twice as likely to lack any dentures as compared to their urban counterparts.
Facility Survey Findings

• Facility surveys have provided further insights

  ~ Recognize extreme need for better oral hygiene but overburdened

  ~ “Prior years of neglect that is too expensive to fix now”

  ~ Top challenges noted: Insurance - pre-authorizations, cost, resident non-compliance and need for transportation

  ~ Better in-service trainings

  ~ “RDH, APs are a tremendous help but we are lately facing challenges on that end as well.”
Identified needs and barriers

• Ability to pay, insurance

• Awareness of the importance of good oral health to healthy aging

• Dentists with specialized geriatric training

• Accessibility of services, transportation

• Workforce that older adults can rely on or trust

• Workforce shortage

• Preventive and regular dental care

• Treatment services, extractions and dentures - services beyond basic exams
CONCLUSIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS
Recommendations

1. Break down healthcare silos to adopt an integrated care approach to reduce disease burden

2. Adopt and expand the use of innovative practices in oral health to address the needs of older adults

3. Eliminate barriers to care

4. Include older adults in pilot dental programs and oral health initiatives aimed at healthy aging

5. Improve California’s dental workforce capacity to meet oral health needs of older adults
QUESTIONS?

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