

2019

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Recommended Citation

Moore, Bridget, "Oral Health Tips, Myths and Resources: A Guide to Lewiston Dental Care" (2019). *Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects*. 470.

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Oral Health Tips, Myths and Resources: A Guide to Lewiston Dental Care

Bridget Moore

March-April 2019

Lewiston, ME

Project Mentor: Cara
Callahan, MD

Problem Identification

- In 2011...
 - 22% of kindergarteners and 33% of third grade children had treated or untreated tooth decay in Maine
 - More than half (51%) of all adults in Maine had lost at least one of their permanent teeth
- Ratio of dentists to residents in Androscoggin County was 1:1,860 in 2017.
 - Lower than the Maine average of 1:1,590
- In 2016, Only 61.9% of Androscoggin County residents had visited a dentist in the past twelve months.
 - Lower than the Maine average of 65.3%
- Dental pain is one of the most commonly cited reasons for Emergency Department visits in the state of Maine

Public Health Impact



2007

32,969 emergency department visits, of Maine residents alone, that were due to preventable dental conditions, including untreated dental caries and dental abscesses.



2009

3.8% of Maine's health expenditures, or \$431 million, were for dental services



2008

53% of adults in Maine had dental insurance.

Even with insurance, adults reported cost-related barriers to health care

Community Perspective

Dr. Greg Frost, DMD, Community Dental Maine

- Education and access are the biggest barriers to health in Maine
 - Even though access isn't there, a lot can be accomplished just by using a toothbrush, toothpaste, and mouthwash
- "Parents come in and say 'look at my teeth' and think that their children are destined to have the same problems, but cavities are preventable"

Dental Hygienist, RDH, Lewiston, ME

- Dental health in Maine is poor, due to lack of basic dental knowledge among the general population.
- The disconnect between dental (oral) health and medical health is a barrier to dental care, even though they are related.

Intervention

- Designed a pamphlet for the general public to address misconceptions, resources, and general tips for dental health
- Objectives of pamphlet:
 - Explain different areas of the body dental health can effect
 - Provide resources for obtaining dental health care
 - Provide resources for information on dental health
 - Debunk common myths regarding dental health
 - Describe proper oral health
 - Visually summarize key points

Response

- Effective in explaining the basics of dental care
- Pictures provide an easy to understand depiction of the information trying to be conveyed
- Provides accurate and valid resources for dental care
- A more formal evaluation of the effectiveness of this pamphlet would provide a more concrete picture as to whether it was effective or not
 - Proposed method for questionnaire on next slide

Effectiveness & Limitations

Effectiveness:

- How to measure the effectiveness of this pamphlet
 - Create a short questionnaire that patients fill out before and after reading the pamphlet
 - Questions should incorporate objectives of the pamphlet (on slide 5) to determine if the objectives were met

Limitations:

- Patients who can't read or don't read English would not be able to access this resource
- Information only reaches those who pick up the pamphlet
 - Small subset of patients are getting the information

Future Interventions & Projects

1. Implementing dental care questions into the question set asked by physicians or medical assistant's during patient well checks
 - This could be done via a lecture to providers regarding the importance of dental health and ways to integrate dental health into their well check visits or preventative health visits
2. Create a patient hand-out that physicians can select in the EMR to be printed out and given to the patient with their visit summary
3. Creating and teaching a class to elementary school children about the importance of dental health
4. Obtaining toothbrushes and/or toothpaste for the Family Medicine Residency to give out to patients

References

- Androscoggin County, Maine, County Health Rankings
 - <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/maine/2019/rankings/androscoggin/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>
- Community Health Needs Assessment 2016, Central Maine Medical Center
 - <https://www.cmhc.org/assets/documents/cmmc/pdfs/chna-cmmc-6.20.16-final.pdf>
- Oral Health in Maine 2013, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
 - <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/odh/documents/oral-health-in-Maine-2013.pdf>