

SCHOOL ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMMES: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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Abstract

School plays an important role in lives of children as they spent more than half of their times in school and learn all their basic manners and habits from there. It also affects the psychological and physical health of child which further have impact on the oral hygiene of students. For school program to be effective it should be cost effective, feasible and should improve the education simultaneously. Schools provide a golden opportunity for learning and developing new skills and also a basic platform to promote oral health. Though further recommendations and enhancements are required to meet the limitations of the existing oral health programs.

Key Words: schools, oral health, health programs.

INTRODUCTION

School plays an important role, not only in reaching out to the children but also their parents and through them to the community.

In 1995, Global School Health Initiative was launched by WHO which claims to promote and improve oral health and also the education related activities. The core objective of this Initiative is to build capacities to commend for improved school health programs. In 2002, World Health Organization (WHO) recommended 'schools' to be used effectively as setting oral health promotions.

The school may be considered as an ideal platform for promoting oral health. At the global level, approximately 80% of children attend primary schools and 60% complete at least 4 years of education, with wide variations between countries and gender. In some countries, more than 50% of children aged 7–14 years are out of school and <20% complete the first grade due to the exploitation of child labor.^[1]

School proves to be a systematic and efficacious way to reach over 1 billion children worldwide and, through them, families and community members.

Importance of Oral Health

Oral diseases are one of the common reasons for loss of more than 50 million active school hours annually. Premature loss of teeth further leads to mal-aligned permanent tooth giving rise to different malocclusions. Growth and development may also be disturbed due to insufficient nutrition intake reason being early loss of teeth in children. In school-going children, dental caries is the most common dental disease followed by gingival diseases. Other dental diseases or conditions which cannot be ruled out are dental trauma, dental erosions, developmental oral and dental defects.

Health Promoting School

A Health-Promoting School views "health" as physical, social and emotional well-being. It builds health concepts into all aspects of life at school and in the community.

Different schools around the world have distinct needs and strength and it varies with areas and region. The Heart of the process of becoming a Health-promoting school relies on the fact that each and every school can Find a way to improve not only the general health but also the oral health of students, parents and teachers. The health-promoting school uses its full organizational potential to promote health among students, staff, families and community members ^[2,3].

Some of the School Oral Health Programs established and running successfully around the globe -

- i. Save Our Smiles (Screening and Sealant Programme)
- ii. Learning About Your Oral Health
- iii. Tattle Tooth I Program
- iv. Tattle Tooth II Program
- v. THETA Program
- vi. Yukon Children's Dental Health Program
- vii. Askov Dental Program
- viii. St. David's Dental Program - A Mobile School-Based Dental Program For Children
- ix. Bright Smiles, Bright Futures
- x. Healthy Mouth, Healthy Body

Future Recommendations for School Dental Health Program in India ^[4]

Some of the recommendations that should be included in school health program in India are as follows:

1. Dental surgeons should be given the opportunity by the Government to give lecture on oral health, oral hygiene, plaque control, oral and dental diseases, oral

cancer or smokeless tobacco use and hazards counseling and topical fluoride application in school health programs.

2. Oral and dental health related topics should be included in School curriculum by the Government.
3. Oral and dental health fitness should be made mandatory for class promotion. There should be active participation of the dental surgeons, teachers, students and also the parents.
4. Dentists should evaluate child abuse cases and child abuse cases will present clinically as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.
5. Strong support and active participation from policy makers and professional support from dental surgeons working in public and private sector in India is required to achieve the above mentioned goals.

Incremental Dental Care

Incremental Dental Care may be defined as “Regular care arranged in such a way that dental and oral disease are treated in increments at the earliest time with proper diagnosis and treatment planning, in such a manner that there is no further need of dental treatment beyond the minimum” [5].

Comprehensive School Health

Comprehensive School Health is defined as “a wide-ranging programs, policies, activities and services that are organized in schools and their surrounding communities.” The basic concept is not only to modify individual behaviour but also enhances his/her environment. Comprehensive School Health Education is a basic scheme for providing positive aspect of health to school-going children and their families. Comprehensive School Health Education Program introduces procedural and general health education lessons at each level of school education to address the overall as well as the oral health of an individual. This program basically focuses on families and communities to address critical health areas that put one at risk. Comprehensive School Health Education Program is a multidisciplinary, organized, sequentially coordinated community based program which guarantees services of maximum quality and efficiency which encourage the emotional, social, educational and physical development of school-going children. [6,7]

DISCUSSION

Oral hygiene status and diseases in children cannot be ignored. For school oral health programs to be successful, there should be active participation of

teachers, students and also the dentists and dental hygienist. Safeguarding the oral health and overall health of future generations is a responsibility that must be shared by parents, teachers and school administrators. A search of literature states that interactions between oral health and systemic health are bidirectional and complex involving many pathways.^[8] In a study conducted by Kay gingivitis scores in oral health education programs and hence concluded that oral health education has a positive impact.^[9] A consistently increased prevalence of dental caries was depicted in India after the point prevalence studies conducted in various parts over last four decades.^[10] The increasing trend of oral diseases in India has to be prevented, the most practical and effective method appears to be community based. Children who suffer from poor oral health are 12 times more likely to have more confined activity days, including missing school, than those who do not. More than 50 million hours are lost from school due to oral diseases annually.^[11] Oral health educations surrounds publicity campaigns, occasional and informative talks at an elementary school, showing of dental health presentations, and a substantial reinforced program in a school curriculum.^[12] The best time for educating the child about dental health is when their healthy habits are inculcating.^[13]

CONCLUSION

Schools are the only platform to reach over a billion children worldwide for promoting oral health and further improving their quality of life. The effectiveness and advantages of health promoting schools are not only limited to the students but also to their parents and the community as a whole. As children are most common group to be effected by dental diseases and poor oral hygiene, hence health promoting activities should be encouraged among them.

The communities, teachers and parents should understand the importance of oral health and consider it as one of their responsibilities in improving the oral health and overall health of their children. Teachers and decision-makers play an important role as they should be willing to include health education and health promotion in schools to provide the advantages and benefits to children.

The school oral health promotional programs should be organised in such a systematic way that they are accepted socially and reachable to the children of all age groups.

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