

Does Poor Oral Health Have Systemic Effects on the Body?

Aim To identify if poor oral health has negative consequences on other body systems and to recognise implications of nursing practice when caring for the elderly

Background and Purpose

→ Older adults aged 65 and over make up 12.3% of the New Zealand population and is expected to double by year 2051.

The 2010 Aged Residential Care Report states that in New Zealand, rates of older adults requiring aged care residential facilities are amongst the highest within OECD countries.

A significant percentage of rest home residents are maintaining increased numbers of natural teeth. Despite this, condition of remaining teeth is commonly less than optimal evidenced by increasing rates of tooth decay. A healthy mouth can be defined as a mouth that is pain-free, infection-free, and has moist mucous membranes, normal salivation and pH, gums that do not bleed and free of untreated dental decay.

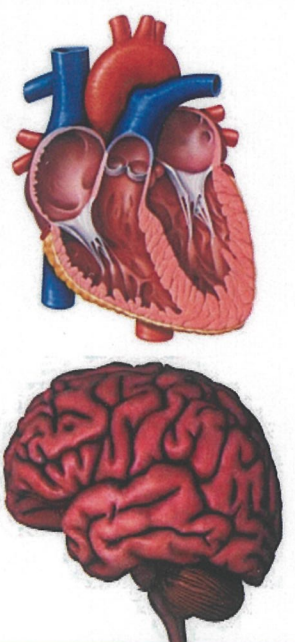
Conclusion

Poor oral health has widespread effects to the rest of the body therefore must be a priority for health professionals within New Zealand. Better oral hygiene in the older adult population will enable quality of life and prevent further complications

Literature Review

Gingivitis is a mild inflammatory gum disease caused by inadequate removal of plaque and bacteria. When left untreated, it can develop into periodontitis which is a serious gum disease as is destructive to gum tissue and bone (supporting teeth) contributing to tooth loss. It has been linked to other disease processes within the body including the brain and cardiovascular system among a few others.

- Bacteria and other harmful substances enter the bloodstream via the periodontal lesion producing inflammation
- This causes a rise in inflammatory markers
- Consequently blood vessels constrict and aggravate plaque build up within the walls
- If vessels affected are located in the brain, stroke may occur



Implications to Nursing

Early detection of poor oral health manifestations are essential for treatment and prevention of further complications. The nurse has a role in providing health education to patients and their family to encourage good oral health is maintained through the correct cleaning process.

References

- Carter, G., Lee, M., McKelvey, V., Sourial, A., Halliwell, & Livingston, M. (2004). Oral health status and oral treatment needs of dependent elderly people in Christchurch. *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association*, 117(11940), 892.
- Grant Thornton. (2010). *Aged Residential Care Service Review*. Retrieved from <http://nzaca.org.nz/>
- New Zealand Dental Association [NZDA]. (2010). *Healthy Mouth, Healthy Aging: Oral Health Guide for Caregivers of Older People*. Auckland, NZ: New Zealand Dental Association.
- Statistics New Zealand [SNZ]. (2007). *QuickStats about New Zealand's Population and Dwellings*. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/>
- Wood, N. (2004, November). How Poor Oral Health Promotes Systemic Diseases [Report]. *Life Extension*. Pictures retrieved from <http://blog.timesunion.com/>, <http://www.implantdentist.co.nz/>, & <http://www.studyblue.com/>