Integrating Oral Healthcare into Primary Care Nurse-Managed Health Centers

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Purpose:
• Establish a sustainable oral healthcare program at 3 Nurse Managed Health Centers (NMHCs) for children and patients with DM.
• Develop recommendations for incorporating oral healthcare competencies into a university nursing curriculum.

Background:
• Poor oral health leads to pain, caries, tooth loss, poor academics, systemic illness, expensive procedures.1-5
• Poor oral health affects 25% of children; poor minority children have 2-4 times the risk of caries.6
• Patients with diabetes are at risk for periodontitis, poor glycemic control, and decreases quality of life.7,8
• Preventive care reduces disease, pain, and expenses.9-12
• NMHCs serve those most at risk.13

Problem:
Poor minority populations experience high rates of oral disease and lack access to dental care.

Methods:
• Integration was structured and evaluated using the Oral Health Delivery Framework.
• Smiles for Life was used for educational materials.
• Questionnaires: demographic data, and evaluation of the program and processes.
• Interprofessional collaboration with a local dental hygiene school and local safety-net dental providers.

Oral Health Delivery Framework: The Integration Process

Sample:
• Parents of children for physicals (n=116 parents, 221 children age 2 mo.-18 yr., 20% < 3 yr.).
• Diabetic patients for group follow-up visits (n=4).
• Health care providers: 6 NPs, 4 RNs, 2 MAs, 16 BSN students, and 5 MSN/DNP NP students (n=33).

Setting:
3 NMHCs serving as bridge clinics in Northern Virginia.

Analysis & Outcomes:
A sustainable oral healthcare program was established.
• 11.2% of families did not have toothpaste or toothbrushes for everyone in the home, < 50% had floss.
• 94-96% of patients met process measures for risk assessment, exam, education, and referral.
• 66.7% of providers increased number of oral exams.
• 77.3% of providers increased number of dental referrals.

Recommendations:
• Tooth models for each station where education occurs.
• Simple teaching materials with pictures/low reading levels.
• Expand program to all adults with chronic disease.
• Incorporation of Smiles for Life curriculum into BSN and NP assessment classes.
• Shared clinical experiences with dental hygienists and NPs

References available upon request.