

Utilizing Video-Based Oral Health Instruction Delivery within Federally Qualified Health Centers

Rates of dental caries in children under the age of 5 are high in families of low socioeconomic status. Early childhood caries (ECC) is defined as having one cavity before the age of 6. Severe early childhood caries (S-ECC) is defined as the presence of multiple cavities before the age of 6.¹ The presence of caries in children is associated with pain, poor nutrition, difficulty concentrating, decreased quality of life, and negative outcomes.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends the first dental visit at the time of eruption of the first tooth and no later than one year of age.² In California, children are required to get a dental checkup by May 31st of their first year in public school, but this is often too late, as they often develop cavities before they are school-aged. By the time LA County children enter kindergarten, almost half have experienced tooth decay.³ It is important to intervene early before children develop dental caries to prevent negative outcomes.

Additionally, preventive health services are currently underutilized. According to the State Auditor's report published in March 2019, only 42% of children between the age of 1-2 with Medi-Cal utilized preventive health services such as well-child visits in 2016.⁴ Only 23.2% of children aged 1-2 who were enrolled with Medi-Cal had an annual dental examination.⁵ The discrepancy between the utilization of preventive general health services and preventive dental services highlights the existing failure to stress the importance of early dental intervention.

We would like to provide a proposal to increase utilization of preventive health care services and to intervene before the formation of caries in children before they are school-aged: we propose a video-based delivery of dental anticipatory guidance at existing federally qualified health centers. While pediatricians and perinatal providers are in a great position to give basic dental anticipatory guidance, we would like to reinforce the "First Year or First Tooth" message through a convenient and easily digestible medium.⁶

Video-based education has proven to be effective in improving health behaviors related to prostate cancer screening, sunscreen adherence, and other health-related behaviors.⁷ Video-based oral health instruction has been shown to be effective in improving oral hygiene in targeted audiences.⁸ When compared to information delivered via physical documents and pamphlets, video-based information was shown to result in increased engagement and long-term retention.⁹ Through a short and easily digestible video clip, the targeted audience can receive dental anticipatory guidance that will be easier to comprehend with less reliance on the compliance required for physical pamphlets and thorough delivery of information by busy medical providers.

The initial development of the "First Year or First Tooth" dental anticipatory guidance videos will be funded by the AAPD Foundation through the Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children initiative. We, however, would like to request additional funding from HRSA to support this proposal. In addition, we plan to lobby with AAPD for increasing funding to dental departments of FQHC's to support our proposal.

With earlier intervention through the promotion of the "First Year or First Tooth" message, we are confident that our strategy will promote better utilization of dental services that can lead to better dental health outcomes for California children before they are school-aged.

References:

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