

Response to “Oral health in the elderly patient and its impact on general well-being: a nonsystematic review” paper

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Dear editor

Gil-Montoya et al has recently published an interesting article in *Clinical Interventions in Aging* entitled: “Oral health in the elderly patient and its impact on general well-being: a nonsystematic review”.¹ Authors presented a non-systematic review of the published data regarding the oral health status of the elderly and its main repercussions, including its impact on general health and nutrition.

As the authors underline, the risk of cavities, root caries, and more commonly observed tooth sensitivity or dry mouth increases with age. Acute and chronic comorbidities, as well as pharmacologic agents used in the treatment of these diseases show a significant impact on oral health.^{1,2}

Poor oral health can affect a person’s quality of life. Among those aspects for keeping up good oral health; daily oral hygiene practices, health education, diet type, and proper oral health policy formulation are very important.³ Actually, epidemiological research of dental problems indicates that most of the elderly neglect hygiene and oral care – brushing their teeth only once a day or not at all, not flossing daily, not cleaning their tongues, not replacing missing teeth with dentures, and avoiding regular dental checkups.^{4,5} Teeth loss and edentulism may be a possible outcome of such actions particularly in elderly. Some authors propose that edentulism could be a good mortality predictor and others associate it with a substantive quality of life impairment.¹ While the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research reported that the prevalence of both partial and total tooth loss in seniors has decreased from the early 1970s, seniors over 65 have lost an average of 13 teeth (including wisdom teeth), and 26% of seniors over 65 have no remaining teeth.⁶ Poor oral hygiene is prevalent among older people all over the world and it is highly associated with oral self-care, behavior, habits, and socio-economic status.^{2,7} Good daily dental hygiene is necessary to maintain good oral health and quality of life in older people. To provide appropriate dental care to the elderly it is also important to promote and provide health education for the elderly, as well as for oral health professionals, public health specialists, and legislators.

In the current demographic and economic perspectives, this is one of the major public health problems of the 21st century.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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