

Title of project:

Oral health knowledge and professional practices of Australian paediatricians

Researchers:

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Aim of the project

There is strong evidence that increasing the oral health knowledge of paediatricians is a successful strategy for improving oral health in children. Paediatricians can play a key role in the prevention of poor oral health however, our understanding of the current level of oral health knowledge in the Australian context is poor. The aim of this project was to use a Delphi process with an international child oral health expert group to develop and test a self-administered cross sectional, web-based survey to assess the oral health knowledge of a sample of Australian paediatricians.

What did we do?

We undertook a scoping study to identify existing tools designed to measure oral health knowledge in paediatricians internationally. Through this process we identified 42 studies that reported on a number of tools that had been used to examine oral health practice and knowledge of paediatricians.

Based on these studies we then developed an international child oral health expert group (n=10) who participated in a 3 stage Delphi process to assist in the development and refining of a pilot cross sectional online survey tool. The pilot survey was then made available online through the Qualtrics platform and completed by 38 Australian paediatricians.

What did we find?

Participating paediatricians were interested in oral health and understood the role it plays in overall health however their lack of training and knowledge hinders them from assessment, referral and patient counselling. The sample of paediatricians highlighted that they see their professional as important in undertaking oral health assessments by rating themselves above oral health therapists and hygienists. This is an interesting finding given that therapists and hygienists are trained to carry out oral health assessment and prevention with children. This points to a lost opportunity for collaboration with these practitioners who have the necessary skills and training to work closely with paediatricians. There is a demonstrated need within paediatricians to improve both skills and confidence in oral health and that the preferred delivery mode for training is online or an E learning package. It is recommended that oral health training be provided to paediatricians at key stages in their training including undergraduate, postgraduate and speciality levels. Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of this group would enhance the long term sustainability of oral health knowledge and lead to improved patient outcomes.

More details:

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