

Denture patient's attitudes to oral health: Is an oral health recall system required for the edentulous patient?

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Objective: A community-based structured initiative introducing a universal denture recall system is suggested to alleviate painful and harmful dental health issues that permeate elderly edentulous patients.

Background: Edentulous patients' understanding of when they need a clinical check-up is limited. There is no 'formal' recall system for denture treatment similar to the '6-month dental check up' ideology society identifies for dentate or partially dentate patients. Therefore this is an area of oral health that is easily dismissed as 'difficult' and pushed into the background.

Method: The beliefs and motivation for what initiates treatment of predominantly elderly edentulous patients were investigated by students in a dental school setting with the use of a structured questionnaire. The condition of the current dentures, patient's problems and expectations were also investigated to give a rounded view of the patient's issues.

Results: Ninety-four percent of the entire sample (of 202 patients) agreed a 12-monthly check-up would be preferable with 71% having some form of pain issues and loose dentures. Over 90% had functional problems with their dentures. The mean age of the dentures was 16 years and less than a quarter of the dentures were in good condition.

Conclusion: Assisting elderly edentulous patients to practice favorable dental health behaviors by introducing a community-based denture recall system is supported by patients in this study and may prevent patients persisting with re-occurring ulcers and problematic dentures.

Keywords: Denture health needs; Edentulous; Elderly; Behavior change.

Biography

John Egan has a Masters of Health Sciences from the University of Otago (2006). He is a Lecturer and convener of the denturism program at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. John also works as a private consultant. He is newly elected Chair to the International Federation of Denturist (IFD) education committee and believes collaborative global data could help form health economies of scale, especially for the elderly partially and fully edentulous patient. This would be in line with the recommendation from the World Health Organization (WHO) that all countries introduce policies for elderly oral health.

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