

Strategies for Improving Oral Health Conditions in Senior Patients

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Abstract

Oral health refers to the condition of gums, teeth and the entire "oral-facial system" which need proper care. Several oral health problems are identified in senior patients who are discussed in this study. It is identified that xerostomia, periodontal disease, cancerous conditions, tooth loss, oral precancerous and dental caries are some of the common oral health problems among senior patients. Identifying potential strategies to reduce these issues and improve oral health of senior patients is the main purpose of this study. Several articles are observed for gaining more and more information about the oral health conditions of senior patients. The articles and journals have provided information about the most common oral health diseases in seniors and particular causes of having these problems. Considering this, reviewing articles and journals refers to the use of secondary methods which led to the collection of some subjective data. As a result it is identified that fluoride is very good for oral health, therefore senior patients need to use fluoride toothpaste as well as they need to brush twice daily. Furthermore, proper care from dentists and floss between the teeth is another strategy for improving oral health of the senior patients.

Keywords: oral health, senior patients, dental issues, fluoride toothpaste.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Oral health is an indicator of the entire health condition, quality of life, and well-being. In the oral health system, people have faced some common diseases such as cavities, oral cancer, and gum. In 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) noticed that oral health is one of the most crucial neglected areas of older people that reduce life expectancy rate. Global survey has indicated that 5-30% older people faced deep periodontal pockets issue [1]. Based on that, proper care of the oral health system has provided better life to the senior people. According to that, this study evaluates effective strategies for improving oral health conditions in senior patients.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research article has helped to understand actual goals of the research study.

Moreover, the aim of the research has helped to complete the study with proper information. According to that, the main aim of this research article is to identify appropriate strategies for improving oral health conditions in senior patients.

- To discuss common oral health disease of senior patients that create health difficulties
- To analyze importance of oral health prevention of senior patients
- To evaluate suitable strategies for improvement of oral health in senior patients

Oral Health Issues in Senior Patients

Oral and dental health is one of the most essential parts in the overall health of older patients. Most of the senior patients have suffered from different oral issues such as gum, cavities, and oral cancer due to poor oral hygiene. One of the most common oral issues of senior patients is gum disease. Globally, a high percentage of senior patients have suffered from gum disease. In the US, about 68% of adults under the age of 65 have gum disease [2]. Another

most common oral health disease is tooth loss. As per the global survey, 1 in 5 older adults have lost all of their teeth under the age of 65 or above. Complete teeth loss or wearing dentures has affected on the nutrition of senior patients as dentures only prefer easily and soft chewed foods instead of hard foods. Based on that, older people face difficulties eating fresh vegetables and fruits that reduce health efficiency.

Oral cancer is another issue of older people that reduces the life expectancy rate of senior patients. "American Cancer Society" reported that more than half of oral cancer patients are less than 65 years old and older. Untreated tooth decay is an oral health issue of senior patients. In US, nearly, 96% adults of fewer than 65 aged and older have issues of cavity and 1 in 5 of older have untreated tooth decay issue [3]. Moreover, there are some other oral diseases that are faced by the senior patients such as periodontal disease, dental caries, xerostomia, and others. Xerostomia indicated issues of dry mouth of older people. This issue refers to the condition of salivary glands that fails to make enough saliva in the mouths of older people. Additionally, oral sensitivity is another common oral issue of older aged people.

Causes of Oral Health Issues in Senior Patients

Oral health issues are a common health disease of senior patients that lead to life risks. Oral health problem of senior patients mainly raised by several causes such as plaque and food left in teeth, poor diet, uses of tobacco, and others. Oral cavity is one of the most effective issues of senior patients that collects sorts of viruses, bacteria, and fungi. Moreover, some of the viruses belong in the mouth and make up normal flora [4]. These floras are generally harmless, but a diet of high sugar creates the conditions of "acid-producing bacteria". This bacterium dissolves the tooth enamel and leads to dental cavities. On the other hand, bacteria near the gum line thrive called a plaque. In the oral health system, plaque accumulates, migrates, and hardens down the length of the tooth [5]. This oral issue inflames the gums and leads to the condition of gingivitis. Increased inflammation in the oral system of senior patients causes gums and begins the pockets in the teeth's. On the other hand, common causes of oral issues of older people are smoking and consumption of alcohol has reduced strength of the teeth. Based on that, consumption of alcohol and smoking has increased teeth loss of the senior patients.

Another common cause of oral issues in senior patients is poor brushing habits. Most of the senior people faced oral issues due to maintaining poor hygiene and brushing of the teeth. Chronic disease is another cause of oral issues in senior patients. Diabetes, arthritis, "Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)", has developed gum disease among the older people. Medication is another cause of oral issues among the older people [6]. In

America most of the older people prescribed medication that leads to dry mouth that reduces flow of saliva in mouth that increases risk of cavities. There are other several reasons that lead to oral issues of senior patients such as frequent snacking drinks, and foods, hormonal change of women, frequent vomiting, and others. Additionally, family history or genetic issues is another common cause of oral issues of senior people.

2. Methods and Materials

In the research study, methodological discussion has helped to identify appropriate techniques and tools for analysis of the data and information. In the methodological part, research philosophy and design plays the most crucial role to identify appropriate research frameworks [7]. Research philosophy and research design mainly depends on the research topic of the article. In research methodology, research philosophy has helped to choose proper data collection tools that helped to gather data about the research study. In this regard, based on the research topic this research article has selected "positivism research philosophy" to identify data gathering processes [8]. Moreover, this research study has chosen "descriptive research design" to evaluate the data of the study [21].

In methodology, data collection has helped to gather information about the research. In research study, two types of data gathering techniques have been used: one is primary, and another is secondary [9]. As per the research topic, this study has selected "secondary qualitative data collection" techniques to gather information. In data collection, this study has included information from "research articles, books, journals, and authentic websites" that were published 5 years ago. In methodology, data analysis is another crucial part of research that helps to represent findings. Based on the "data collection techniques" this research study has selected "secondary qualitative data analysis techniques". In this regard, this study includes "thematic analysis" to evaluate the result of the research.

3. Results

Thematic analysis

Theme 1: Effect of oral health disease in senior patients

Oral health disease is a detrimental factor of nutrition that declines the overall status of the health of senior patients. Aging and oral health issues are correlated with each other significantly, indicating different dental issues. Moreover, aging is associated with some common dental issues such as dry mouth, periodontitis, increased sensitivity, and tooth loss as well. In developing countries, oral disease is a life-threatening issue that reduces the quality of life of the people [10]. Oral disease is a detrimental factor of nutritional status and health of the senior people. The oral disease mainly affects the regular eating

habits of senior patients. One of the most common oral issues of senior patients are teeth loss that create problems for the older patients to consume hard foods. On the other hand, disorders of oral issues such as cavities indicated poor eating habits of older people [11]. The older patients mainly faced issues of "loose painful teeth or ill-fitting dentures" that decline the ability of eating of the senior people. Moreover, oral issues of senior patients have reduced basal metabolic rate and "lower exercise levels and lean muscle mass". According to that, oral issues of senior patients have declined the overall physical strength of the older people.

Theme 2: Significance of oral health prevention for senior patients

Oral health is an important part of general health but maintaining oral health is difficult for the older age people. Aging has changed oral mucous membranes that indicate health issues of the older people. The performance of oral mucosa is one of the most protective functions that impact the general health and well-being of the older people [12]. In this regard, decline protective barriers function of oral mucosa expose the oral cavity through daily activities. Based on that, oral care and prevention is one of the most significant parts of health improvement for senior patients. Moreover, oral issues affect negatively on the daily performance of older people due to reduced capacity of chewing. In this regard, oral health prevention has helped to improve the daily eating habits of the senior patients. Oral issues of older people indicated some other difficulties such as limited food choices, poor communication, weight loss, low self-esteem, and others [13]. According to that, proper care and maintaining hygiene of the oral systems of older people has helped to improve communication capability and health well-being as well.

Theme 3: Evaluation of existing initiatives and their issues

Oral health issues are common among older people, and they suffer from various types of oral health problems such as periodontal diseases or dentures as well as mouth cancers and other gum diseases. In this context, governments and healthcare sectors have adopted various types of initiatives in order to prevent these issues and improve the oral health of older patients. "The Gerontological Society of America" has recently arranged an efficient program involving proper maintenance of oral health issues among older people [14]. It has been observed that older people are the most vulnerable group to oral health issues by 2060, the number of older people will reach 98 million in the United States.

The program has been aimed to improve the oral healthcare practices of older people by integrating practitioner's researchers and policymakers. The World Health Organisation has taken several types of initiatives for preventing oral health problems, including technological integration within the

healthcare sector [15]. In addition, this international organisation has also recommended that governments have to ensure the adoption and maintenance of potential strategies to prevent the oral health problems of older people. These initiatives are efficient, however, lack proper maintenance and management along with lacking potential infrastructure. On the other hand, older people lack proper knowledge and awareness of the importance of oral health which is also a barrier to implementing these initiatives effectively.

Theme 4: Potential strategies to prevent oral health issues among senior patients.

It is identified that oral health issues are common among older people who enhances their health complexity. Different strategies to prevent oral health issues among senior patients are discussed in this section of the study. Primary prevention of oral issues refers to home-care initiatives such as using toothpaste that includes chlorhexidine and fluoride as these aspects are effective in improving oral health [16]. Apart from that, technology-based tooth brushing programmes can also be used as primary prevention strategies. Senior patients need to visit the dentist at least once a year for early detection and prevention of oral diseases. Along with that, the oral health of senior patients requires extra care for preventing common issues regarding oral health. Senior patients should be recommended to drink fluoridated water as fluoride is immensely important for good oral health among older people.

4. Discussion

In the following study, a secondary qualitative data collection approach has been used and the outcomes of the data collection procedure reveal that the condition of oral health is consequently worse among older people. Older aged patients suffer various types of oral health issues including mouth cancer, periodontitis, sensitivity and dry mouth. On the other hand, tooth loss is among the most common oral health issues for older people. It has been identified that older health issues are common for patients aged 65 or older than that [17]. Additionally, maintaining oral hygiene properly can prevent these issues and risks by improving the condition of oral health among older adults. However, having severe oral health problems can affect the health and nutritional aspects of these people as it poses a direct impact on their eating habits.

These oral issues have a major impact on the health and nutrition of older adults as tooth loss has the potential to change eating habits and preferences. Along with that, these issues also impact daily eating and nutrition performance by decreasing chewing capability. The percentage of older people is increasing rapidly throughout the world as well as the rate of increasing healthcare issues, including oral health problems. In addition, it has been observed that with technological advancement, older people

have been focused on retaining teeth which has the potential to affect their "daily oral hygiene" [18]. Several important factors have been identified impacting oral healthcare habits of older people, including "social context", motivation, "oral functions" and "cognitive factors". Having severe oral health issues can affect cause difficulty in eating, quality and status of nutritional status and quality of daily life.

Oral healthcare issues, being common among older adults, several efficient initiatives and actions have been taken by the healthcare sector, governments and international humanitarian organisations. The main purpose behind these initiatives is to create awareness of the significance of oral healthcare, improve the oral healthcare habits of older people and prevent common issues and diseases. It has been observed that increasing oral healthcare issues among senior citizens can lead to "non-communicable diseases" and an inability to self-care [19]. Regarding this, it can be stated that preventing these issues by creating awareness of potential oral care habits and improving oral healthcare conditions among older adults is vital. Considering the increasing rate of ageing people in the USA, "The Gerontological Society of America" has taken an effective initiative and launched a program recently. The main purpose behind the implementation of this program is to create awareness and increase the integration of potential infrastructure and suitably skilled and experienced persons.

The World Health Organisation has been focused on developing collaboration and integration between governments and other organisations for developing and implementing suitable strategies and initiatives. However, several loopholes in these initiatives have been observed including lacking proper maintenance and infrastructure along with lacking proper awareness among older people. It has been identified that the oral healthcare sector has been unable to prevent these issues thoroughly which has influenced a dramatic growth of dental problems [20]. In this context, creating awareness among older people for improving their oral healthcare habits can be an effective solution. Therefore, older people can use toothpaste consisting of fluoride and chlorhexidine along with using technological programming for tooth brushing can be another efficient solution. In addition, regular visiting the dentist and taking proper care will help to reduce these issues. Adopting these practices and creating awareness through efficient government initiatives can improve the context of oral healthcare among older people.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has been focused on assessing the oral health problems of older patients and recommending suitable strategies for preventing the issues. Older patients have been identified to be the most impacted group for suffering oral health problems. Tooth loss and dry mouth are among the

most common issues for older people, while periodontitis, mouth cancer and increased sensitivity are other significant oral health issues of these people. It has been identified that suffering from oral health issues impacts the eating habits of these people and poses a vital impact on their nutritional and health status. Ageing changes several types of demographic and health factors that directly influence complex health problems including oral health issues.

Effective recommendations have been proposed including using toothpaste containing chlorhexidine and fluoride as well as brushing twice every day. Thus, this study has provided efficient insights into the current state of oral health conditions of older people and the required strategies to prevent these issues. A secondary qualitative data collection method has been followed and existing data from journals, newspaper articles and other reliable websites have been collected. Using a primary data collection method by conducting a survey or interviews directly with the patients and healthcare personnel can provide more effective insights associated with the required improvements of the existing initiatives and strategies.

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