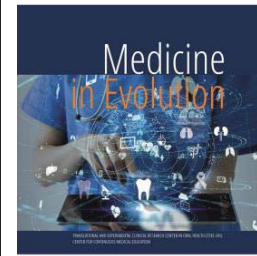


Evaluation of the oral health values in a group of adults



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Abstract

This study aims to put into perspective the attitudes and oral health values of a defined population group from Romania, in connection with their dental habits. By using a set of closed questions, the individuals participating to the study were able to give a glimpse into the general psychology behind most of their decisions regarding oral health. The paper comes to provide valuable information regarding the difference between the oral health values of the studies subjects from different groups of environment, educational levels, sex, age, and work field. The results showed that the most favourable population group to have a high oral health values and sanogenic behaviour is correlated with the feminine sex, high educational level, urban environment, medical work field, and not so much with age, as the results state a clear non-difference age dependant.

Keywords: oral health values, behaviours, attitudes, adults

INTRODUCTION

Health is a topic of interest nowadays because with the evolution of technology and the emergence of the Internet and social networks, access to information is much easier, thus, the general population has become more and more interested in the various means of maintaining and improving the general state of health. This also applies to oral health, which is closely related to general health [1].

It is generally considered that oral health is a veridic indicator of general health and a key indicator of general wealth. It is also known the fact that for a good oral health the individual must have: a properly tooth brushing technique that should be carried out at least 2 times a day, the use of auxiliary means of oral hygiene, periodic checks at the dentist, a balanced diet low in carbohydrates, administration of fluoride, etc. [2].

The oral health habits of the general population are greatly influenced by the multitude of information with which they have daily contact through the mass media, social networks or other means of information or communication thus, for a healthy habits and behavior, they must filter a large amount of information [3,4].

Oral health exists along a continuum influenced by the values and habits of people and communities, aspects studied in this paper [5]. Oral health might be also used as a mean to evaluate the individuals on self-care practices [6]. The degree to which people invest in oral hygiene contributes to maintaining health. Educational level, treatment options in interaction with patients' values can encourage the adoption of profilactic behaviors [5,6].

To the extent that the values regarding oral health determine the behavior of patients, the enrichment of knowledge regarding the aspects valued by the individual becomes a priority that influences the quality of dental treatments. Thus, a profile of the population from different social backgrounds regarding personal values towards health can be outlined, an important aspect considering that they influence lifestyle.

Aim and objectives

In order to establish the awareness among the general population, as well as the oral health values of the individuals, which will represent the main aim of this paper, certain objectives are established: evaluation of importance towards maintaining and improving oral health, and of oral health values regarding the necessity of dental visits. Collection of general data was done: the level of education, living environment as well as the field of activity. In addition, the study aims to correlate the results obtained according to the level of education, environment, gender and type of activity (medical/non-medical field).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The cross-sectional study was carried out between October and November 2021, on a group of 241 participants in Oral Health and Community Dentistry Department of the Faculty of Dental Medicine, "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Bucharest. A self-administered questionnaire consisting of closed questions - Oral Health Values Scale (Edwards, 2021), completed electronically via Google Forms, was used as a research tool, validated in Romanian language [5,6]. This was distributed via a link and was completed online by the people who participated in the study. The questionnaire contained questions related to the oral health values of participants related to oral hygiene, but also about the importance given by the participants to the means of maintaining oral health. The data obtained from the questionnaire were processed with Google Sheets, Microsoft Office Excel and Microsoft Word.

RESULTS

POPULATION.

Adults between the ages of 18 and 68 participated in this study, the average age being 29.7 +/- 10.69. Among the subjects who participated in the study, 73.86% (N=178) are between 18-30 years old; 12.45% (N=30) are aged between 31-45 years; and 13.69% (N=33) of the participants are between 46-68 years. The distribution of all participants by age is shown in the graph below using the Shapiro-Wilk test for interrogating the normality of the null-hypothesis.

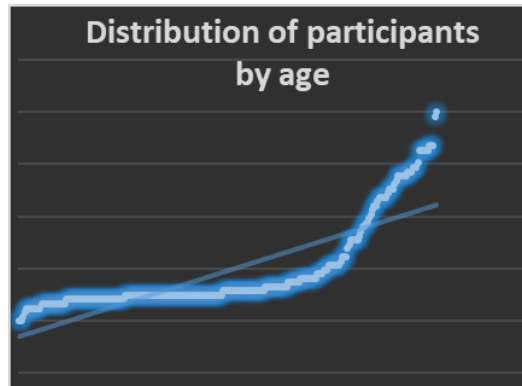


Figure 1. Abnormal distribution of the participants by age

SEX.

The gender distribution was not equal, with 75.52% of females participating (N=182), and 24.48% of males (N=59).

ENVIROMENT.

Looking at the residential environment of the people who participated in the study, it was found that 83.8% (N=202) come from the urban environment, while a smaller percentage of 16.2% (N=39) come from the rural environment.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS.

The distribution according to the educational status of the participants was also assessed, and the results revealed that the majority consists by people with university education in a proportion of 61.6% (N=143), followed by people with postgraduate education 20.7% (N=48), undergraduate education in proportion of 17.2% (N=40) and people with elementary education in a very small percentage.

FIELD OF WORK.

Regarding the field of activity, we found out that a percentage of 58.9% (N=142) of the participants come from the medical field, while a percentage of 41.1% (N=99) of the participants come from the non-medical area.

IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL FLOSS.

Regarding the habits of the people participating in the study regarding the use of dental floss, a percentage of 19.5% (N=47) totally agree with the fact that it is not healthy to floss for a few days, if the overcrowded schedule does not allow this practice. A percentage of 18.3% (N=44) of the participants agree with this and a percentage of 29% (N=70) partially agree with not using dental floss when time does not allow them to do so. Also, 17% (N=41) of the participants disagree and 16.2% (N=39) totally disagree with not using dental floss in case of a busy schedule. By gender, we observe the fact that with regard to the male gender, an equal percentage of 20.34% (N=12) totally disagree, disagree and partially agree with the lack of prioritization of the use of dental floss, 22.03% (N=13) agree and 16.95% (N=10) totally

agree with the fact that flossing is not a priority in an overcrowded schedule. For women, a percentage of 14.84% (N=27) totally disagree, 15.93% (N=29) disagree, 31.87% (N=58) partially agree, 17.03% (N=31) agree and 20.33% (N=37) totally agree with the lack of prioritization of the use of dental floss in the case of an overcrowded schedule. From the point of view related to field of activity, among the people from the medical field 27.46% (N=39) totally disagree with the lack of prioritization of the use of dental floss in case of time shortage, 28.87% (N=41) disagree, 27.46% (N=39) partially agree, 9.1% (N=13) agree and 7.04% (N=10) totally agree with this aspect. In the case of people from the non-medical field, an equal percentage of 31.31% (N=31) partially agree and agree with the lack of prioritization of the use of dental floss and a percentage of 37.37% (N=37) are totally of agree with this aspect. In addition, among the people from the non-medical field, not a single person disagreed or totally disagreed with the lack of prioritization of the use of dental floss in the case of a busy program.

IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL TREATMENTS.

The values of the participants regarding the dental treatments necessary to maintain an adequate dental-periodontal status is a good one, a percentage of 92.9% (N=224) of the participants totally agree to invest in dental treatments in order not to end up with dentures. A percentage of 4.6% (N=11) of the people participating in the study agree with the treatment of the diseases that appeared at the level of the teeth and gums, in order not to require a denture, a percentage of 0.4% (N=1), equally, partially agree and disagree with this. Also, 1.7% (N=4) of the participants in the study are in total disagreement with the preventive treatment of diseases occurring in the teeth and gums, as they do not have a problem with wearing a dental prosthesis.

In the case of dividing the lot by gender, a percentage of 100% (N=56) of male persons and a percentage of 90.66 (N=165) of female persons totally disagree with the idea of dentures prosthesis and prefers the application of dental treatments to prevent this.

Depending on the field of activity, 100% (N=142) of people in the medical field opt for the preventive application of dental treatments in order not to end up wearing dentures, while only a percentage of 82.83% (N=82) of people from the non-medical field are of the same opinion. Also, among people from the non-medical field, a percentage of 11.11% (N=11) disagree with the lack of application of prophylactic dental treatments and wearing a dental prosthesis, an equal percentage of 1.01% (N= 1) I partially agree and agree with this and 4.04% (N=4) totally agree with the idea of becoming denture wearers.

In the case of the division of the lot according to the area of origin, a percentage of 100% (N=202) of the people from the urban environment totally disagree with this and 56.41% (N=22) of the people from the rural area have the same opinion. The rest of the people from rural areas present the following answers: 28.21% (N=11) totally disagree, an equal percentage of 2.56% (N=1) partially agree and agree, and 10.26% (N=4) totally agree with the lack of application of preventive dental treatments and wearing a dental prosthesis.

PATTERN OF DENTAL VISITS.

Regarding the dental attendance 50.2% (N=121) of participants in this study totally disagree with visits to the dentist only in case of emergency. A percentage of 18.7% (N=45) disagree that visits to the dentist should only be done in critical moments, 12% (N=29) partially agree with this, 8.3% (N=20) agree with the fact that specialist consultation should only be approached in case of the presence of oral diseases and 10.8% totally agree with this.

In the case of dividing the group according to the field of activity, a percentage of 85.21% (N=121) of people from the medical field totally disagree with presenting to the dentist only in case of acute diseases of the teeth and gums, and the rest of 14.79% (N=21) disagree with this. Among people from the non-medical field, 26.26% (N=26) totally agree

with going to the dentist only in case of a problem, 20.2% (N=20) agree, 29.29% (N =29) partially agree and 24.24% (N=24) disagree.

Depending on the area of origin, a percentage of 59.9% (N=121) of people from the urban environment totally disagree with the dental consultation only in the case of an acute condition, 22.28% (N=45) disagree with this, 14.36% (N=29) partially agree and a small percentage of 3.47% (N=7) of people from the urban environment agree. In the case of people from rural areas, a percentage of 66.67% (N=26) totally agree with the need for a dental consultant only in case of acute conditions and the remaining 33.33% (N=13) agree with this thing.

DISCUSSIONS

The study was carried out on a sample of 241 people with different levels of education, both from the medical and non-medical fields. The people in the studied group came from both urban and rural areas.

The aim of the study was achieved, so a concrete evaluation of values towards the oral health of the people involved was achieved.

Regarding the values of the people in the studied group towards the importance they give to oral health, we can state that, in a large percentage, the answer is a favourable one. The results showed that females give more importance to oral health than males, which can be explained by the fact that women are generally more concerned with physical appearance and as a result, they pay more attention to maintaining an adequate dental and gingival status while obtaining at the same time an aesthetic and harmonious smile [6-8]. Also, the results show that women have a higher level of knowledge about the connection between oral health and general health [7,8].

Also, the results of the study show that the concern for oral health increases with the level of education, similar with other researches [5,6]. Thus, people with university or post-graduate education give greater importance to oral health than people with secondary or primary education. The analysis of the level of education in relation to the level of knowledge about oral health shows that, as the education level of the subjects increased, so did their level of knowledge about oral health.

People with university and post-graduate studies show a greater concern towards oral hygiene compared to people with secondary and primary education. The same applies to females compared to males. The results showed that people from the medical field are more concerned about oral hygiene than people from the non-medical field, aspect that can be explained by the fact that people from the medical field possess a level of knowledge more about the importance and role of tooth brushing in maintaining an adequate oral status [5,6]. This also applies to the use of dental floss as an auxiliary mean of achieving dental hygiene. People in the medical field have a better attitude towards using the dental floss [5,6].

Related to the pattern of dental visits and attitude related to the costs of the treatments necessary to maintain an adequate oral health status, these differ depending on certain variables. In the case of dividing the group according to the field of activity, the results show that people from the medical field have a positive habit and attitude towards regular dental check-ups compared to people from the non-medical field [5,6]. Thus, people from the medical field prefer the application of prophylactic treatments in order to avoid complications or even the loss of teeth and the need to replace the remaining space.

CONCLUSIONS

Oral health, as an integrated part of general health, is a subject of great importance nowadays because a poor oral health implies a low quality of life. Thus, a large percentage of the people who participated in the study gave a favourable answer regarding the attitudes and values towards the importance given to oral health. Following the results obtained, it was observed that oral health values and attitudes differ depending on certain variables: gender, level of education, environment and field of activity.

Thus, female persons attach more importance to oral health than male persons. Also, the higher the level of education, the greater the interest in oral health. In the case of the environment, people from the urban environment give greater importance to oral health than people from the rural environment, something that can be explained by the low information and limited access to medical and dental services.

Regarding the field of activity, people from the medical field are better informed and have a more favourable habits and values towards people from the non-medical field.

The results show the importance of oral health education in communities, but also in the dental clinics. Given the current conditions, in Romania there are population groups at risk that have limited access to education and health services.

Thus, it is necessary and recommended to carry out dental prevention programs with the aim of increasing the degree of awareness of the importance of oral health and to motivate and sustain the population to adopt healthy habits and positive oral health values.

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