



Aging and Oral Care: An Observational Study of Characteristics and Prevalence of Oral Diseases in an Italian Cohort

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Abstract:

Background: Poor oral health is a common condition in patients suffering from dementia. Several aspects of this systemic pathology contribute to causing oral problems: cognitive impairment, behavior disorders, communication and, motor skills deterioration, low levels of cooperation and medical-nursing staff incompetency in the dental field. **Objectives:** The objectives of this study were to evaluate the prevalence and the characteristics of oral pathology in a demented elderly population, as well as to check the association between the different degree of dementia and the oral health condition of each patient. **Materials and Methods:** In this observational study (with cross-sectional design) two groups of elderly patients suffering from dementia, living in two different residential care institutions were recruited. The diagnosis of dementia of each included patient was performed using the Clinical Dementia Rating Scale. In order to evaluate the oral health condition of the included subjects, each patient underwent a physical examination of the oral cavity, during which different clinical parameters were analyzed (number of remaining teeth, oral mucosa, periodontal tissues, bone crests). To each parameter, a score was assigned. Spearman's Rho test was used. **Results:** Regarding the prevalence of oral pathology in elderly suffering from dementia, it emerged that 20.58% of the included patients had mucosal lesions and/or new mucosal formations (in most cases undiagnosed and therefore untreated). The prevalence of periodontal disease was equal to 82.35% and a marked clinically detectable reabsorption of bone crests was found in almost all patients (88.23%). 24.13% of patients, who underwent the oral examination, had totally edentulous maxillae and/or with retained roots, without prosthetic rehabilitations. The correlation index showed the presence of a linear correlation (inverse relationship) between the degree of dementia and the state of health of the oral cavity of each patient. **Conclusions:**



Several factors contribute to poor oral health in the elderly suffering from dementia: cognitive functions deterioration, behavioral disorders and inadequate medical-staff nursing training on oral hygiene. This study also demonstrated that the lower the dementia degree is, the lower tends to be the oral health status. In order to guarantee a complete assistance to these patients, residential care institutions should include in their healthcare program specific dental protocols.

Biography:

Master's degree in Dentistry and Dental Prosthesis at University of Milano - Bicocca. Thesis title: "The oral health of patients suffering from dementia: characteristics and prevalence of a geriatric population of Monza - Brianza territory"

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