

## ORAL HEALTH EDUCATION TO THE COMMUNITY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SANTA MARIA: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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**Abstract:** Oral health care, with a focus on comprehensive health, for children and adults who are socially vulnerable, helps the development of autonomy for these individuals. Oral health has implications that range from insulin resistance, due to periodontal disease, to much more complex systemic complications, involving the cardiovascular system or even neurodegenerative pathology. In view of this assumption, the action reported in this work was carried out by the Academic League of Public Health and Dental Epidemiology of the ``Universidade Franciscana`` (LASCEO) together with academics from UFN, with the central objective of promoting health education, aiming to provide equity for population participating in the event. An interprofessional action was carried out, in which 12 dentistry students carried out oral hygiene guidance using mannequins, brushes, teaching materials, screening for oral comorbidities in 150 people, including children and adolescents, in order to refer them for dental care. Given what has been mentioned so far, oral self-care practices expressing playfulness, associating dental care and listing a variety of elements for the activity were punctual. Furthermore, nursing students offered the third dose of the vaccine against COVID-19, rapid STI tests, distribution of condoms and blood pressure and blood sugar screening. It must be noted that the activity provided integration between academics and the community, in addition to contact with other realities and enhanced theoretical knowledge about humanization and collective health in future professionals, causing a bidirectional gain.

**Keywords:** Health promotion; Quality of life; Oral Health;

## INTRODUCTION

A priori, the relevance of oral health education to the community stands out, especially the most vulnerable, aiming at a mutual benefit between the community and academics, considering the applicability of the principles and guidelines of the Unified Health System (SUS) in practice, in a effective. It is also worth highlighting the importance of changing habits regarding more adequate oral hygiene, thus considering the essential applicability of oral health education to the population as soon as possible. Education and motivation methods aim to inform patients about oral diseases and encourage changes in their hygiene habits (VALARELLI, F. et al, 2011).

The Brazilian Public Health Association (Abrasco) frequently holds seminars on living conditions and health status, whose themes cover health and quality of life. Furthermore, Brazilian congresses on collective health, epidemiology, social sciences and health also discuss the same themes in different situations. Thus, two reviews, published simultaneously (Minayo, 1995; Monteiro, 1995), explored various dimensions of the topic of health and quality of life in Brazil and Latin American countries, relating the topics to issues such as poor income distribution, illiteracy, the low level of education and precarious housing and environmental conditions.

The Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986), one of the founding documents of current health promotion, also refers to a combination of strategies: actions by the State (healthy public policies), by the community (strengthening community action), by individuals (development of personal skills), the health system (reorientation of the health system) and intersectoral partnerships (idea of multiple accountability, whether for problems or proposed solutions for them), in order to promote equity in preventive health, with a

political and technical focus on the health-disease-care process. With the unfolding of this theme, it is unquestionable to affirm that oral health is part of general health and is considered essential for quality of life (Cibirka, Razzoog, Lang, 1997).

Caries and periodontal disease represent the most prevalent diseases in the Brazilian population and the biggest causes of tooth loss and, consequently, have impacts in all dimensions, be it physical, functional, nutritional and even psychosocial (Pereira, 2010). The context in which individuals live revealed a great modulator of habits and lifestyle, as well as the perception of people's care for their oral health. And, therefore, it came to be considered an important instrument of discussion in public health policies.

According to Sutherland & Fulton, 1992, health promotion consists of activities aimed at transforming individuals' behaviors, focusing on their lifestyles and locating them within families and, at most, within the cultural environment of the community in which they live. In this case, health promotion programs or activities tend to focus on educational components. In this sense, it is essential to provide educational activities related to hygiene and oral health.

Given the assumption, with the aim of promoting health promotion actions, in the month of August 2022, the project "Integration Day of Nova Santa Marta" was carried out, which included free socio-assistance services, vaccination, oral health action, information on the vaccination schedule, dental prenatal care and care in basic health units for the community in a philanthropic school. Given this context, the action in question was carried out by LASCEO - UFN, which was formed by 30 dentistry students coordinated by two teachers. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the objective of the aforementioned league,

which aims to promote health, stimulate dentistry students with a view to integrating theoretical-practical-scientific training. Thus, improving a more humanized view, through the comprehensiveness present in the area of collective health; in order to promote health, especially oral health, putting into effective practice the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS) present in theory: universality, comprehensiveness and equity.

The Unified Health System (SUS) is one of the largest and most complex public health systems in the world, ranging from simple care to assess blood pressure, through Primary Care, to organ transplantation, guaranteeing full, universal access and free for the entire population of the country (Brazil, 1990). Therefore, the relevance of the validity of the system highlighted above can be seen, as well as its principles linked to effective practice, especially in the aforementioned collective oral health action.

## METHODOLOGY

This work is descriptive in nature, an experience report and was carried out with the aim of promoting autonomy of care and therefore equity for the most vulnerable population. It is hoped that with the guidance received, people can be protagonists of their self-care, thus helping to improve their quality of life.

Considering the importance of health education, especially oral health, through collective health actions for the most vulnerable community, the interprofessional action was carried out in August 2022, through the project "Integration Day of Nova Santa Marta", which took place at municipality of Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul. Thus, the Academic League of Collective Health of the "Universidade Franciscana" (LASCEO - UFN), through the participation of twelve dentistry students, carried out oral hygiene

instructions for children and adults.

The instructions took place with the help of a mannequin to demonstrate correct tooth brushing and flossing and, with the aim of promoting active participation, supervised brushing was carried out at the school that hosted the educational action. In addition, kits with toothbrushes, fluoridated toothpaste with 1,100 ppm of fluoride, dental floss and an educational folder containing information on prenatal dental care, brushing babies and emergency care units available in the municipality were distributed. Furthermore, it is important to mention that during the screening, at least 150 people were referred for dental care at the "Universidade Franciscana" clinic.

Furthermore, nursing students offered the third dose of the vaccine against COVID-19, rapid STI tests, distribution of condoms and measurement of blood glucose and blood pressure.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Oral health education for the community, especially the most vulnerable, becomes essential in order to seek the applicability of the theory present in the SUS in practice, effectively and successfully. Theory without practice becomes 'verbalism', just as practice without theory becomes activism. However, when practice is combined with theory, there is praxis, the creative and modifying action of reality (FREIRE, 1996). Therefore, through the action offered by the Academic League for Public Health and Epidemiology (LASCEO), the importance of health education and promotion is highlighted, considering the benefits present for both the community and the participating academics. It is evident that these community actions promote bidirectional gains in which the community benefits through health education and academics benefit from knowledge of social

vulnerabilities and learning to use light care technologies (Zamarchi, 2022).

It is worth highlighting that health promotion actions act directly in the training of humanized professionals, who in turn have a differentiated view with empathy towards the patient, seeing them as a complete human being who needs support to achieve recovery. satisfactory.

It can be highlighted that the brushing technique used for children's learning was the Headphones Technique, considering that it is an easy-to-understand method, a priori, it was guided in ball (circular) movements, on the front (vestibular) of all the upper teeth (upper) and then all the front parts of the lower teeth (inferior). Then, it was time to teach with "little train" movements (back and forth) in the part where food is chewed (occlusal/incisal) and this is done on all the upper teeth and then on the lower ones, then, it was exemplified that using "broom" movements to brush the back of the tooth (lingual/palatal) with movements as if sweeping the tooth in all the elements above and then in all the elements below, so that all sides of the dental element were brushed. The last part of this stage was to teach how to properly clean the "mouth mat" that is the tongue (Fones, 1934).

Subsequently, guidance was provided regarding the correct use of dental floss with demonstration directly in the patient's mouth, while he looked in the mirror to learn the technique. The explanation was made highlighting that the movements must be made by sliding up and down between the teeth so that it penetrates the gum region of the adjacent teeth. Regular use of dental floss is an important measure in controlling dental biofilm and preventing of interproximal caries (Kallio PJ., et al 2001). Therefore, it is important to encourage the population to use dental floss and it is necessary to educate people to use it correctly, so that its use is

efficient in reducing biofilm and preventing caries and periodontal diseases (Hujoel., et al 2006). Furthermore, it was clarified that a greater quantity of toothpaste does not provide a better quality of oral hygiene and it is also essential to use toothpastes with a concentration of 1,100 PPM of fluoride for both adults and children.

It can also be noted that screening for oral comorbidities was carried out in at least 150 people. Among this number cited, it was found that they would have to be referred for dental care at the teaching clinic of the ``Universidade Franciscana``, as they needed restorations, endodontic treatment, extractions, among other treatments.

It must be noted that the action carried out contributed positively to the participants so that they can become protagonists and autonomous of their oral health, because as mentioned by Mendes (1996) in the Ottawa letter, health education and public policies are central points for the practical consolidation aimed at improving the health of populations. According to the author, education must be used as an instrument of social transformation, not only formal education, but all educational action that promotes the reformulation of habits, acceptance of new values and that stimulates creativity.

Finally, it is important to highlight that for the students, the experience with the participants was of great value, as it promoted contact with other realities and enhanced theoretical knowledge about collective health and humanization.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Considering the aspects observed, the relevance of oral health education to the population, especially the most vulnerable, is undoubtedly relevant, aiming at one of the most important principles of the SUS: equity. This way, the action carried out by the

Academic League of Collective Health and Epidemiology of Dentistry of ``*Universidade Franciscana*`` (LASCEO-UFN), with students of the Dentistry course for people in situations of social vulnerability, contributes to the development of autonomy in health, making the individual protagonist in the process of establishing a healthy life.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the importance of this action as a consequence of a bidirectional gain, considering the academics involved and the population served. It is also worth highlighting the promotion of improving quality of life for individuals, with a view to adapting healthy habits for oral health. Finally, we can highlight the essential application of the theory present in the SUS in practice effectively.

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