

Oral Care Challenges in American Nursing Homes

Student's Name or Students' Names

Department Affiliation, University Affiliation

Course Number: Course Name

Instructor's Name

Assignment Due Date

Oral Care Challenges in American Nursing Homes

Oral health is a fundamental part of a person's overall wellness. However, among older people, oral hygiene is often overlooked. In nursing homes and retirement communities across the US, there are several reasons for poor oral health. As a person grows older, the body begins to deteriorate. As such, wholesome care becomes more urgent. When it is lacking, it can cause various problems in the body. Oral care, for instance, is a form of preventive care that contributes to the overall health of elderly patients. When this care is not provided, patients run the risk of developing oral diseases. Oral diseases affect patients' comfort and become a risk factor for other diseases. Such diseases include atherosclerotic vascular disease in people with chronic periodontitis. Oral diseases also negatively impact pulmonary health. Oral diseases have been proven to affect patients physically, socially, and psychologically. Among older people, preventive care is essential for their well-being. Nursing homes are vital points of care for this population. Approximately 16,000 nursing care facilities in the US offer care to approximately 1.4 million elderly patients (Sifuentes & Lapane, 2020).

While nursing homes provide crucial primary and acute care services, oral health is overlooked and often comes as an afterthought. It is estimated that only 16% of patients in nursing homes receive oral care. This leaves a large population of elderly patients at risk of developing further health issues (Sifuentes & Lapane, 2020). So, why do nursing homes struggle to provide oral health to older people? One of the primary reasons for declining oral health in nursing homes is that staff may be ill-equipped to provide oral care. It has been established that more than half of staff members in nursing homes are Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). CNAs help older patients with their daily routines, including administering medication, providing hygiene, and monitoring their health. With so many responsibilities, they easily

overlook oral hygiene, especially for patients who cannot care for themselves. Additionally, it is doubtful whether CNAs are adequately trained to provide oral care (Sifuentes & Lapane, 2020).

Secondly, patients who reside in nursing homes often have multiple comorbidities and often have chronic conditions. Such health issues make it even more difficult to provide oral care. For instance, it is estimated that 20% of older patients in nursing homes have missing teeth, and a further 8% have broken teeth (Chamut et al., 2023). Additionally, some patients have chronic conditions such as dementia, which makes it difficult for them to be given oral care. Some refuse to have their teeth brushed, giving CNAs a difficult time.

The declining oral health in nursing and retirement homes can also be attributed to the lack of dental coverage. Many patients are on Medicare and Medicaid, where the former does not have dental coverage. As such, procedures such as dental exams, cleanings, X-rays, and services like cavity fillings must be paid for out-of-pocket (Chamut et al., 2023). Since such services are expensive, many patients cannot afford them and hence go without them. Patients covered by Medicaid may have dental insurance coverage, but this varies depending on the state where the patient resides. Where a patient lacks dental coverage, access to oral care becomes limited.

Finally, nursing homes cannot often ensure compliance with federal health mandates around oral health. This is usually because they cannot do so. The federal government, through the US Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), mandates that nursing homes offer primary and emergency oral health care to their patients and conduct oral health assessments upon admission of patients. Additionally, they are to facilitate patients to meet dental appointments by providing transportation and applying for reimbursements (Sifuentes & Lapane, 2020). This does not happen often due to capacity issues, putting patients' oral health at risk. Various changes need to be made to avert the looming crisis of oral health in nursing homes. Possible mitigation measures

would include retraining staff on oral care and better insurance coverage plans to improve access to oral care.

References

Chamut, S., Shoff, C., Yao, K., Fleisher, L. A., & Chalmers, N. I. (2023). Oral health among Medicare beneficiaries in nursing homes. *JAMA Network Open*, 6(9), e2333367.

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.33367>

Sifuentes, A. M. F., & Lapane, K. L. (2020). Oral health in nursing homes: What we know and what we need to know. *The Journal of Nursing Home Research Sciences*, 6, 1–5.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7286629/>



MyPaperWriters.net
Custom Writing at its Best

Hire the Best Nursing Paper Writers for Your Nursing Paper Task.

Order Now
