



Institute for Community Health

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Feasibility of an Obesity Intervention in a Pediatric Dental Clinic.

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Objectives: With the high prevalence of childhood obesity, interventions in settings that provide routine services to children are desirable. This study assesses the feasibility and acceptability of adapting primary pediatric dental care to include an intervention promoting awareness of child obesity risk, customized recommendations, and referrals.

Research Design and Intervention: Approximately 150 patients, aged 6-11, from a community health clinic, are being followed longitudinally for 12 months through two to three routine dental visits. The health clinic patient-base is culturally and linguistically diverse. At each preventive/diagnostic semi-annual visit, dental hygienists facilitate an assessment of BMI and obesity-promoting behaviors - including dietary intake, physical activity, TV viewing, and family meal patterns. The hygienist uses a reporting form to provide families with an individualized "health report card" with interpretive information, recommendations and referrals, if necessary. The study evaluation includes an assessment of the extent to which the subjects and their caregivers adopt the recommendations and follow through with the referral, and an assessment of the acceptability of the intervention in the dental setting from providers, subjects and their caregivers.

Significance: Pediatric dental settings may offer an excellent opportunity for obesity interventions. Children usually see dental providers at least two times per year for primary care visits, twice as often as their pediatrician. Additionally, there is synergy between nutrition recommendations for dental care and overweight treatment and prevention, and hygienist-patient relationships are often strong.