

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

Practice Number: 33021
Submitted By: New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services
Submission Date: December 2011
Last Updated: December 2011

Pregnancy and Oral Health/OB Collaborative

Emerging research indicates a strong correlation between periodontal infection and adverse pregnancy outcomes (such as pre-term delivery and low birth weight) and an estimated 62% of women report not having a dental visit during their most recent pregnancy. Recognizing the need to provide oral health education and resources to women at high-risk for periodontal infection, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) developed a collaborative program with the OB Department and Nutrition Services at Southern Jersey Family Medical Centers, a federally qualified community health center.

The collaborative utilizes the "Train-the-Trainer" model where OB staff are trained on the importance of addressing oral health during pregnancy. Following the training, OB staff provide education to all pregnant women who receive pre-natal care. Utilizing a "Train-the-Trainer" model enables the program to reach a much larger population of pregnant women than what could be achieved through direct patient education by NJ Children's Oral Health Program staff. The training session focuses on the importance of preventive oral hygiene practices during pregnancy, prevention of early childhood caries, and the importance of dental care during pregnancy. During the training session, Children's Oral Health Program staff provide oral health education resources for patients and staff and personal care oral health supplies for distribution to patients.

Oral health resources distributed to staff include the following:

- "Access to Oral Health Care during the Perinatal Period" and "Oral Health Care During Pregnancy, A Summary of Practice Guidelines."
- A laminated fact sheet, "Oral Health Recommendations for Health Care Professionals."
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Dental Clinic Directory, "Dial a Smile".

Oral health resources for staff distribution to clients include the following:

- A tri-fold pamphlet entitled "Two Healthy Smiles" developed by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center.
- A baby tender and xylitol wipe for use in cleaning infants' mouths are attached to the "Two Healthy Smiles" brochure and distributed to all pregnant women.
- New mothers receive an instruction sheet entitled, "Dental Do's From Birth to 1 Year!"
- Toothbrushes are provided to the OB Coordinators for distribution to all pregnant women at the conclusion of patient education.

Costs for supplies are less than \$1.50 per patient. Other program expenses include staff time for training and preparation of resources.

OB Coordinators at participating clinics collect data on a quarterly basis on the number of pregnant women that receive oral health and hygiene education. Data indicate that 912 women in FY2010 and 1,293 women in FY2011 received oral health education and resources.

Due to the success of the Collaborative, the Children's Oral Health Program replicated the initiative at a second federally qualified community health center located in central New Jersey. In FY2012, plans include further expansion into additional FQHCs in other parts of the State.

Program evaluation activities include data collection on the actual number of women that received dental care during their pregnancy.

Lessons Learned:

- Benefits of the program include increased awareness of the importance of oral health and hygiene and access to dental care for pregnant women.
- It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of dental visits by pregnant women, improvements in oral health status, fewer negative birth outcomes and a reduction of early childhood caries.
- Prior to program implementation, secure consent to participate from the OB Director and other pertinent administrative staff.
- Provide staff with all necessary materials and education resources to promote the importance of oral health to their patients.
- Repeat the training on an at least annual basis to educate new staff and reinforce the correlation between oral health and systemic health.

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