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NURSING STAFF KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING ORAL HEALTH AMONG EATING DISORDER PATIENTS

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Introduction: Different problems as tooth decay, gingivitis and dental erosions are more frequent in individuals suffering from eating disorders. Previous studies have shown that there is limited knowledge concerning oral health among different health professionals working with patients with eating disorders. The purpose of this survey-based study was to present how the staff describes their knowledge about the potential risk of oral illness in their patients.

Methodology: The survey consisted of 18 questions with answer options presented. The questions addressed how the staff perceives the importance of oral health of their patients and their experience and knowledge of oral symptoms and how they acquired it and used it in patient care. The response options ranged from "Very good/very important" to "very bad/not important" for questions that measured the experiences and attitudes as well as "Yes/No/Do not know" – answers for the questions measuring whether staff are knowledgeable about the subject in question. Three participating clinics were included. In total, 53 surveys were sent of which 29 were answered.

Results: Nearly half of the respondents stated that patients found that oral health was important. The majority had occasionally received questions about oral health and they ask their patients about their oral health in relation to their eating disorders. There were more participants that had obtained their knowledge from their daily work rather than from earlier undergraduate studies. The results of the study suggest that participants experienced lack of knowledge in some areas.

Conclusion: This study supports the results of other studies and indicates that there is a willingness and a need to increase the knowledge of oral health among the professional categories at the eating disorders clinics.

Biography

Birgitta Lindquist has completed her PhD from Gothenburg University, Sweden. She has been working with carious and eating disorder patients at the Clinic of Odontology for the past 30 years. She is a Lecturer, Odontology Doctor and Cariology & Oral Health Practitioner.

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