

Oral Health Promotion for the Elderly - A systematic review of the global status

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Introduction

- UN reports, an increase of 11.7% global share of older persons (above 60 years) in 2013 from 9.2% in 1990 and is expected to reach 21.1% by 2050. ⁽¹⁾
- This demographic transition poses a public health challenge because of increased old age health problems. Dental caries and Periodontal disease comprises a considerable public health problem among the elderly in the majority of countries. ⁽²⁾
- Health promotion programmes targeting older people are rare and this reflects the lack of oral health policies in many countries. ⁽²⁾
- Thus it warrants a need to check the Oral health promotional activities aimed at the elderly population across the globe to understand the inequalities in this group.

Systematic review

Aim:

To identify the factors contribute to the oral health promotional activities aimed at improving the oral health of the elderly population.

Objectives:

- To search for studies assessing the knowledge, attitudes, behaviour practices and other determinants of oral health in elderly.
- To critically appraise these studies.
- To identify the determinants and barriers to oral health delivery system aiming at elderly.

Methods

Search Strategy

- Three electronic data bases - PubMed, Embase and Web of Science
- Keywords “Oral health promotion” and “Elderly”

Inclusion Criteria

1. Language: English only
2. Population: Elderly population above 65 years
3. Time period: 2000 until 2014
4. Study designs: Descriptive studies only
5. Interventions: Oral health promotion activities like self-assessment of oral health behaviours, practices and correlating clinical assessment
6. Outcomes: Assessing the oral health promotion determinants like knowledge, attitude, behaviour and practices which promote oral health

Screening of abstracts undertaken by independently by two reviewers.

Quality assessment was done by using JBI quality assessment checklist

Disagreements settled by discussion by two reviewers.

Results

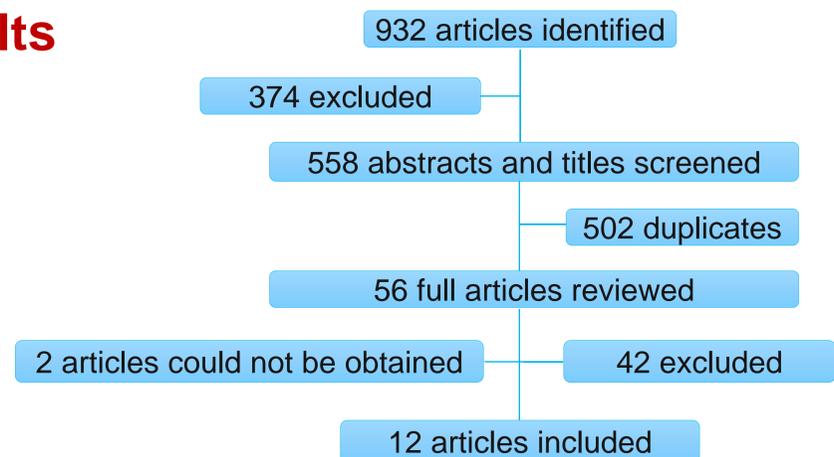


Figure 1: Flowchart outlining the included and excluded studies

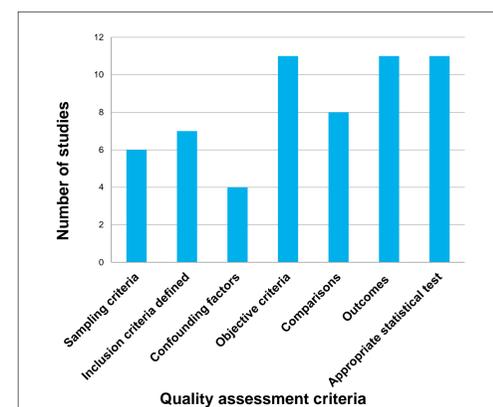


Figure 2: Methodological quality of included studies

Key findings:

- Not enough evidence to support the activities that promote oral health in the elderly population.
- Developed countries (e.g. Sweden and Japan) demonstrate the impact of effective public health policies.
- Developing countries- Health behaviours are determined by deep rooted cultures and have limited geriatric oral health promotional measures.
- The definition of elderly is not uniform all over the world.
- The social inequality in health care is profound at the global level; people of high income countries have received care considerably more often than people of low and middle income countries.

Discussion- WHO Strategies

1. Incorporate oral health promotion and disease prevention into national public health programmes based on the common risk factor approach. ⁽³⁾
2. Improve surveillance of epidemiological data especially from Africa and Asia.
3. Urgent need to train oral health professionals in the social science dimensions of oral health care with a multidisciplinary approach.
4. Research on Oral health care delivery systems of elderly should include clinical oral health indicators as well as socio-behavioural indicators.

Conclusion

- Developed countries show strong evidence that oral health promotion is most effective when incorporated into public health policies.
- Developing countries need to work on developing their health care delivery systems integrating both oral and general health.
- Oral health promotion can be achieved by strengthening the existing systems, reorienting towards a preventive approach and translating research findings to better public health practise.

References

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3. Petersen PE YT. Improving the oral health of older people: the approach of the WHO Global Oral Health Programme. Community Dent Oral Epidemiol. 2005;33:81.