

The oral health status of Irish Traveller Children in East London: a pilot outreach service.

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Introduction

- Travellers have been identified as a key vulnerable group for which there is sparse healthcare data (Aspinall, 2014).
- Research suggests that this group has a high level of unmet need and low levels of dental registration (Edwards and Watt, 1997).
- Research has identified that trust between Travellers and services is important in the development of a treatment alliance.

Aims and Objectives

AIM

- To assess the suitability of an outreach dental service for East London Traveller children.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide a dental examination for children aged 2-18.
- To collect data on patients oral hygiene, diet and oral health status.
- To use appropriate investigations to aid diagnosis
- To record treatment provided
- To compare the collected data with existing literature
- To develop the service in accordance with the findings and repeat the project again in three months time.

Method

- A mobile dental unit was used over a three day period to examine and treat child patients living in authorised Traveller sites in East London.
- An anonymised standardised pro-forma was used by the outreach clinician to collect data on demographics, oral hygiene, diet, oral health and treatment provided.
- Each patient had a caries risk-assessment.
- Routine and emergency treatments were provided where it deemed to be appropriate.
- Consent was sought from the parents of the Traveller children.

Results

- Examinations were performed for 23 Irish Traveller children (13 males and 10 females), average age 8 (range 2 to 16 years)
- The majority (83%) of children had seen a dentist within the last 2 years (Fig 1).
- Less than half (47.8%) brushed twice daily, 87% had a moderate to highly cariogenic diet (Fig 2).
- 91% were assessed as being at moderate -high risk of developing further caries (Fig 3).
- At least one carious lesion was evident in 74% of children (Fig 4).
- All children received oral hygiene instruction, 13 had radiographs, 22 had fluoride varnish applied, 15 patients had 21 restorations and 16 fissure sealants were placed in 5 patients with 2 patients referred for further treatment

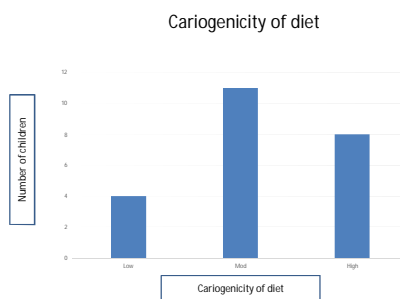
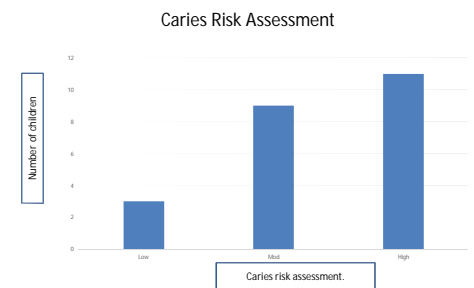
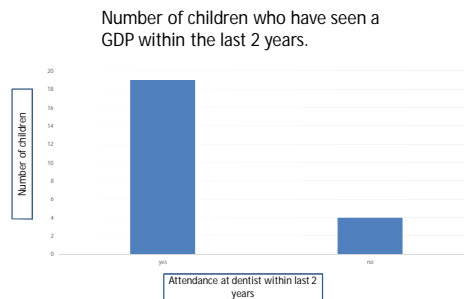


Figure 2

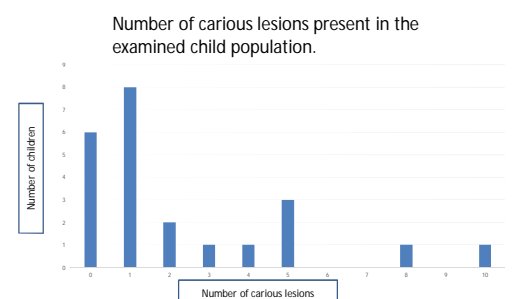


Figure 4

Discussion and Recommendations

DISCUSSION

- Unlike previous literature concerning the oral health of Travellers, the majority of children seen in this outreach project had seen a general dental practitioner within the last two years. Despite this, the majority of children had visible evidence of caries, moderate to highly cariogenic diets, and were assessed as moderate to high risk of developing future caries.
- The dental mobile was acceptable to these children and the pilot service was able to provide both preventive and restorative dental treatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further data from a larger sample group would be beneficial when identifying trends within the Traveller community.
- Qualitative data about patients oral health related quality-of-life and acceptability of the dental mobile would be beneficial to supplement the quantitative data.
- Offering preliminary screening within Travellers homes may help to build a trusting relationship prior to visiting the mobile dental unit.

References

Aspinall, P.J. 2014. *Hidden needs: identifying key vulnerable groups in data collection*. Data and Research Working Group of the Inclusion Health programme: London
Edwards, D.M. and Watt, R.G. 1997. Oral health care in the lives of Gypsy Travellers in East Hertfordshire. *British Dental Journal*, 183(7), pp. 252-257.

