Preventive Dental Care

An educational program to integrate oral care into pediatric oncology

Erin Hartnett, DNP, APRN-BC, CPNP, and Barbara Krainovich-Miller, EdD, PMHCNS, ANEF, FAAN

BACKGROUND: Early childhood dental caries (dental cavities) is an infectious process. The development of oral problems during cancer care results in pain, fever, and delay in treatment.

OBJECTIVES: The objective of this project was to integrate preventive oral care into pediatric oncology care.

METHODS: This project consisted of an educational program for pediatric oncology providers who completed pre- and postprogram surveys assessing oral health knowledge, attitudes, and practice; attended an oral health education session; and performed oral assessment and fluoride varnish application on children during cancer treatment.

FINDINGS: Three major outcomes resulted from this project: (a) 15 nondental healthcare providers attended the education session and 11 became certified by the American Academy of Pediatrics, (b) 53 pediatric patients with cancer received an oral assessment and fluoride varnish during the two-month project, and (c) oral health assessment and fluoride varnish was instituted as a standard of care.

KEYWORDS
pediatrics; childhood cancer; oral health; dental caries; cavities; fluoride varnish

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