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MOTIVATE: Oral Health Leads to Total Health

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MOTIVATE: Oral Health Leads to Total Health: Oral Health Education Needs of Long-Term Care Direct Care Staff

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Research Project Description

- MOTIVATE: Maine’s Oral Team-Based Initiative: Your Access To Education was established to raise awareness about the connection between oral and systemic health among older adults.
- Objective 1: Identify knowledge gaps in staff oral health education in long-term care settings.
- Objective 2: Identify preferred education strategies and topics for enhancing staff's knowledge and skills to improve resident oral health care in long-term care settings.

Survey Methodology

- Survey instruments were developed for direct care staff and administered at six long-term care (LTC) homes in New England.
- Survey domains: Respondent profiles/demographics, Oral health care provision, Interprofessional care, Staff oral health training, knowledge, and attitudes, Staff knowledge and attitudes about oral health care, Preferred training formats.
- Of the 654 direct care staff that were offered the survey at the 6 LTC homes, 397 staff returned the survey, for an overall response rate of 62%.
- A slight majority of respondents indicated they were certified nursing assistants (48%) and registered nurses (18%). The second most common response was “other” (20%). Many of the titles provided were related to the general categories of activity staff, housekeeping and laundry, maintenance, skilled nurses, recreational staff, rehabilitation and physical therapy, and administrative and office staff.
- 80% of respondents noted oral health care as important or very important to resident satisfaction.
- The majority (81%) agreed that oral health care is very important in preventing disease.

Results: Needs and Barriers to Interprofessional Oral Health Care

- Staff appreciate the importance of oral health care to overall health and resident satisfaction. Staff buy into the concept that oral health care is important but do not appear to be a barrier to the provision of good oral health care.
- A theme noted in survey write-in was that staff could use additional equipment such as toothbrush heads and smaller toothpaste containers for residents who might tend to have toothpaste with them. A few respondents mentioned locating toothbrushes and toothpaste for residents who might tend to have them in their rooms.

Results: Educational Needs

- Limited time, often identified as a function of staffing patterns, was a concern and should be taken into account when providing training. Preferred staff training formats were identified as: In-person classes (46%); Online webinars (42%); Hands-on demonstrations (35%).

Recommendations

- Establishing a basic level of oral health care knowledge, skills and attitudes among staff and providing consistent access to high quality oral health care tools.
- Providing training and education for direct care staff. Staff training and education should utilize mixed learning methods, such as in-person class, online computer webinars, hands-on demonstration, printed materials, DVD or audio materials and online recordings.
- In addition to oral health care, training and education in denture care would be beneficial for the direct care staff.
- Identify specific roles for staff in supporting oral health care at each implementation site.
- Upgrading oral health care equipment or provide some basic tools for everyday oral health care.

Conclusion

- While the provision of good oral health care is important in LTC settings, there are key barriers to care and educational needs present among LTC staff including the need for increased understanding of interprofessional oral health care roles, the need for a basic level of oral health education across direct care staff lines, and the need for training and tools that take into account the frontline realities of LTC direct care.
- Another prominent theme was the need for more staff, primarily so that staff would have more time to perform oral health care. Having more care staff, or being specifically scheduled at regular times, and given breaks, was another often-mentioned solution.

Project research carried out by: University of Maine Center on Aging & Lunder-Dineen Health Education Alliance of Maine

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Since beginning your work at your current employer how often have you had oral health education and training? 48.6%

- 16.0%
- 15.3%
- 8.2%
- 2.4%
- 1.7%
- 1.6%
- 1.2%
- 0.0%

Future Training Topics of Interest (N = 286)

- Write-in comments from survey:
  - “I think handouts, in-service, and maybe videos which show what may happen if someone doesn’t receive oral care, may help ensure regular oral care.”
  - “I would like to learn about how to effectively clean teeth and how to teach others to do so.”
  - “I would like to learn more about dental care, including toothpaste, flossing, and general care.”

“I don’t know what to do with cleaning their teeth.” 44.8%

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