Assessing and Improving Children’s Oral Health

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Project Status Not active

Host Institution University of Alabama at Birmingham: Center for the Study of Community Health
University of Michigan (previous center): Prevention Research Center of Michigan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Yale University: Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

Health Topics Community health | Oral Health

From 1999 through 2001, four Prevention Research Centers (PRCs) collaborated to create an Oral Health Network. The researchers developed ways to help community and public health agencies determine risk factors and rates of dental disease in children as well as their access to dental care. They also helped identify communities that needed oral health promotion programs.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina PRC tested an electronic survey to predict rates of dental cavities and access to dental care for children in kindergarten through fifth grade. Researchers at the Yale PRC created an Oral Public Health Surveillance and Evaluation Center where researchers and oral health experts developed systems to collect and assess the number of dental cavities in children aged 7 to 10 years and identify children at risk for cavities. The University of Michigan PRC compared four information gathering sources (elementary school surveys, a children’s health center, state Medicaid claims, and private insurance claims) to determine which data (such as number of fillings, prematurely missing teeth, and number of cavities) were valid indicators of a community’s oral health. The PRC in Alabama discovered that many children in Birmingham, aged 5-12 years, were eligible for Medicaid benefits that cover dental sealants but did not take advantage of the service. Researchers evaluated the quality and cost of the sealant program, identified barriers to using the program, and modified the program to overcome the barriers.

Research setting
No specific focus

Race or ethnicity
No specific focus

Gender
No specific focus

Age group
Children (4-11 years) | Adolescents (12-17 years)