Communitywide Strategies to Promote Oral Health

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Host Institution University of Alabama at Birmingham: Center for the Study of Community Health
Columbia University (previous center): Harlem Health Promotion Center
University of Washington: Health Promotion Research Center

Health Topics Oral Health

Researchers at three centers are collaborating to develop and evaluate a community-based oral health promotion program in a predominantly African American community at relatively high risk for periodontal disease. Almost half of the respondents to a community survey believed it was normal to have childhood cavities, pain in teeth when eating cold foods, and tooth loss in old age. A lower, but significant, percentage of respondents believed bleeding or receding gums were normal. A program to address these misconceptions will include educational activities for community residents, health care professionals, and patients. Community education will include training by lay health advisors, messages aired by local media, and the distribution of brochures and posters to schools, local businesses, and community organizations. Professional education will be aimed at dentists, primary care physicians and their staffs, and will include information about the risk factors for and prevalence of periodontal disease in their community and how to teach patients about oral health. Professionals will also receive educational materials to distribute to and discuss with their patients. Researchers will ask participants to evaluate the program's influence on community members’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior with respect to oral health.

Research setting
Community

Race or ethnicity
Black or African American

Gender
No specific focus

Age group
Children (4-11 years)

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