Educators' perception of oral health in children's schools in Brazil

Percepção de educadores sobre saúde bucal em escola infantil do Brasil

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to explore educators' perceptions regarding oral health promotion and the application of Atraumatic Restorative Treatment in the school environment. It is an exploratory descriptive observational study with a qualitative approach. The sample consisted of 18 educators from an Early Childhood Education Center. For data collection, a form was used with open and closed questions about oral health care for children: recreational and educational activities, supervised brushing and Atraumatic Restorative Treatment. Data were
analyzed by descriptive analysis and by the Discourse of the Collective Subject. About 60% of educators considered caries a disease, 50% having observed toothache in children in the school environment. The educators considered the educational/preventive activities and the use of Atraumatic Restorative Treatment beneficial to the children. They reported relevance in oral health prevention and promotion actions carried out in the school environment, observing the generation of autonomy and empowerment in children. They also cited a favorable opinion on the use of Atraumatic Restorative Treatment.

Keywords: health education, school health services, oral health, caries disease.

RESUMO
Este estudo teve como objetivo explorar a percepção de educadores a respeito de promoção de saúde bucal e a aplicação do Tratamento Restaurador Atraumático no ambiente escolar. É um estudo exploratório descritivo observacional com abordagem qualitativa. A amostra constou de 18 educadores de um Centro de Educação infantil. Para a coleta de dados utilizou-se um formulário com questões abertas e fechadas, sobre cuidados da saúde bucal das crianças: atividades lúdico-educativas, escovação supervisionada e Tratamento Restaurador Atraumático. Os dados foram analisados por análise descritiva e pelo Discurso do Sujeito Coletivo. Cerca de 60% dos educadores consideraram a cárie uma doença, 50% observou dor de dente nas crianças no ambiente escolar. Os educadores consideraram as atividades educativas/preventivas e o uso do Tratamento Restaurador Atraumático benéficos às crianças. Relataram relevância nas ações de prevenção e promoção de saúde bucal realizadas no ambiente escolar, observando a geração de autonomia e empoderamento nas crianças. Também, citaram parecer favorável ao uso do Tratamento Restaurador Atraumático.

Palavras-chave: educação em saúde, serviços de saúde escolar, saúde bucal, doença cárie.

1 INTRODUCTION
The disease caries still affects a large part of the industrialized countries, and many individuals suffer the consequences of the lack of resolutiveness (1). It can lead to absence in school, to psychosocial impairment, the emotional instability of the affected individuals (2), and also to systemic problems such as chronic diseases, cardiovascular diseases and obesity (3).

Considering the development of caries, and the prospects of minimally invasive and preventive restorative techniques (4), the use of Atraumatic Restorative Treatment (ART) is an alternative for its interruption (5). Indicated for high-
risk children, initial caries lesions with cavities or not in enamel (therapeutic sealing), restorative (6). This technique reduces costs when compared to conventional restorative treatments, is easy to perform and effective (7), reduces clinical time, reduces painful symptoms, and is a good alternative for all age groups, in the private and public clinical environment (8,9). However, it is observed that a large part of the research (3,5-6,10-11) published on ART has a quantitative design, aimed at evaluating the performance of the restorations carried out, indications, advantages and protocol (12).

Prior to ART, education and health promotion should be promoted to children, through oral hygiene instruction and healthy diet, obtaining a preventive and therapeutic focus, and not only restorative (6).

The school environment provides children with opportunities to develop autonomy, participation and creativity to promote health (13). It is therefore relevant the discussion and reflection of the empowerment of knowledge and the understanding of educators regarding educational, preventive, curative actions with preschoolers.

Therefore, the objective of this study was to evaluate the perception of educators with regard to the oral health promotion and curative actions performed in a children's school in the south of Brazil.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is a descriptive, observational, exploratory study of a qualitative nature. It obtained approval from the Ethics Committee in Research with Human Beings of the State University of Maringá - UEM (CAAE: 58901216.8.0000.0104) and the Department of Education of the investigated municipality.

The data were collected through self-applied questionnaires, for a sample of educators of children from 0 to 5 years of age, from a children's school in southern Brazil, in the year 2016-2017, most of the children presented social and behavioral vulnerability. In this place, students of the Dentistry course of a local University, developed a project with playful-educational activities, supervised brushing, and curative care by ART technique.
All 18 educators working with the children were invited to participate in the study. The management of the CMEI contacted and informed the educators about the objectives of the research. After they agreed to participate, they signed a Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE). The data collection was carried out in a period of 4 months (2016 to 2017), by a single researcher. The self-applicable questionnaires were answered in a private room at the school, at times of convenience, and they were assured the confidentiality of the data.

The questionnaire had closed and open questions, observing: identification, dental caries perception, deciduous tooth care, perception of child behavior in the school environment before and after educational/preventive activities and the relevance of the school for this attention, including curative treatment with ART.

The data were collected and inserted into a database in Excel, being later analyzed by descriptive analysis and the Collective Subject Discourse Technique (DSC), expressing the thoughts of the interviewees collectively (14,15).

3 RESULTS

The socio-demographic data presented 18 educators, belonging to the female gender, with an average age of 40.8 years. The performance in the school environment varied from 2 to 32 years, 93.45% were married.

Regarding the perception of oral health, 10 (55.5%) educators reported that they had not received information on graduation, but all considered it relevant to participate in the school grade. In relation to dental caries 13 (72.2%) considered it a disease, 3 (16.6%) a hole in the tooth and 2 (11%) a decalcification.

About 9 (50%) educators observed toothache in children during the school period, and their perception in relation to the participation of children in the educational/curative project was the report of improvement in child behavior, self-brushing and even observed that some children lost the habit of using the pacifier.

Of the 9 open questions, the answers extracted the key expressions and central ideas of each individual and later built the DSC, emerging the themes:
action of the school in the promotion of oral health, impact of education and prevention in the school environment, concern with deciduous teeth, curative treatment performed with ART technique.

In relation to ‘the performance of the school in the promotion of oral health, they answered: "The support of the school is part of education, it promotes attitudes that leads the individual to take care of oral health, at this stage it is easier to learn. To train conscious adults with always clean teeth, daily oral hygiene and adults with preserved dentition".

As for the impact of education and prevention on the school environment, they said: "Children feel like taking care of their teeth, they have stopped using their pacifiers, they are interested in better oral hygiene. Give the guidance to the parents".

In relation to deciduous teeth: "Care is important from an early age, since the habit of learning hygiene must be established and maintained for life. The chances that the permanent ones will remain healthy are great".

About the ART technique in curative treatments said: "At the beginning of dental treatments at school, children cried, now they like to be attended to. Interesting, a new form of care, more humanized. They don't see the device that scares them, and the noise, they feel more confidence, they won't have traumas in the future."

4 DISCUSSION

The school environment brings together children in age groups that are conducive to acquiring healthy habits, in order to achieve changes in the health-disease process. It has been noted that the oral health guidelines should be clear, precise and unambiguous (16).

The analysis of the collected data showed that the educators understood the role of the school in health promotion. Of the total sample studied, 17 were graduates, however 55.5% did not receive information on oral health. Findings also found in another study (17), which evaluating this class of professionals concluded that the social actors of school and health, should work together for
the development of self-care skills in health, and prevention of risk conduct in all educational opportunities.

In this research, although some of the educators had no oral health training, they understood the relevance of the school in the educational process of the children, and the dentists as a source for the dissemination of this information. In agreement, Arciere (18) cited that this complementation was necessary for training in prevention and health promotion actions, because educators, besides the influence on child behavior, have daily contact with the child.

The literature (19) addressed that in the Public Network of Ducks (PB), the sharing of notions about oral health occurred with educators, enabling them to make the theme part of the daily life in the school environment.

Another study (20) evaluating perceptions of teachers in public schools in Wales, from different socioeconomic levels, noted that educators understood the importance of the family approach in health care responsibility, but this dialog had not yet happened. Perhaps for this reason, the children showed activity of the caries disease, with manifestations that could jeopardize their health and learning. Thus, the participation of health professionals in the school is timely in the educational process.

According to Watt (21) since users do not always have access to health services, groups at risk of oral diseases need to receive alternative approaches in other social spaces such as schools, and the inclusion of other professionals for effective actions is relevant. "Healthy schools" work in an integrated way the contents of health and practice in the day-to-day, working the integral development of the child.

The educators mentioned that there should be pedagogical activities involving health professionals and also the family.

The goals of the Health in School Program (PSE) report the importance of scheduling and prior preparation of students about health activities to be carried out and developed in an interdisciplinary way, being related to the pedagogical moment and content that students are working (23).
Study (22) evaluating the acquisition and knowledge of oral health by teachers from a Public School of Belo Horizonte- MG reported the importance of the school for the incorporation of the concepts of oral health and hygiene, in order to disseminate them in the classroom. To this end, the professors suggested ways of integrating dentists into debates, workshops, discussion groups, lectures, congresses, as well as the development of pedagogical projects. These authors found high schooling among the participating teachers, however 56% had never studied oral health in their training, with confusion of concepts about the role of toothpaste, floss, tooth-supportive and unfavorable foods and fluoride. In the present study, the educators presented high schooling, which may justify their adherence and acceptance for inclusion of the theme in the school curriculum.

The interaction between professionals- educators- family nucleus is important so that healthy habits not yet acquired can be implemented, and accompanied to stimulate the practice of self-care.

As for the impact of educational and preventive activities in the school, the educators observed that after playful-educational activities and supervised brushing, children became more attentive and motivated to carry out their oral hygiene, and could act as possible multipliers of the information received to parents. Also, those who possessed the deleterious habit of the pacifier ceased their use.

The importance of prevention of oral diseases from childhood, such as caries, is emphasized in order to prevent harm to the well-being of the individual. Recent research (23-24) has shown over the years a decline in the prevalence of caries disease, however it still persists in risk groups in Europe and Brazil. In the 2010 epidemiological survey of oral health in Brazil, it was found that 53.4% of children in the 5 year age group had at least one deciduous tooth with experience of caries disease (23). Possible sequelae are decreased appetite, difficulty chewing and weight loss, difficulty sleeping, behavior change (low self-esteem and irritation) and low school performance (25).
Research (19) addressing the family, educators and children of Public Education of Ducks (PB) with actions of health promotion practices and use of ART, observed improvements in oral health, and autonomy for the creation of multiplying agents of health.

The playful-educational activities, supervised brushing exposed by the Oral Health Project proved highly applicable and capable of being incorporated into the school environment, as they provided acceptance and satisfactory results. Continuity of educational activities is necessary, this is done slowly, but once this empowerment has occurred, they perpetuate themselves throughout life.

On deciduous tooth care, educators cited the relevance of these procedures for the integrity of permanent teeth. The literature (19, 26) cites the relevance of the care given to deciduous teeth, which although temporary, are essential for the functions of chewing, phonetics, and occlusion of the individual, and must be preserved to exfoliate naturally. Another study (27) cites that early childhood dental problems can have a negative effect on oral health and quality of life in children, exteriorizing them to their family. In agreement, in this study, there was unanimity among educators regarding the relevance of deciduous tooth care for the prevention of permanent tooth integrality.

On the use of ART technique, the educators reported being interesting, attracumatic, leaving the children more tranquil, and with greater acceptance for dental care. Study (6) in programs for preschoolers, concluded that ART can contribute to the reduction of complex invasive treatments, which require a greater collaboration of the patient, in addition to the intervention of specialists.

Study (6) based on systematic reviews and meta-analyzes cited that the propensity to fear is usually associated with the needle of local anesthesia, and the noise of the high-rotation apparatus, thus ART is an excellent option in the management of the behavior of children and/or anxious patients, using only manual instruments, and rarely make use of local anesthesia in cavities in the dentine, contributing to reduce complex invasive treatments. According to the literature (28) cites as relevance of ART the absence of anesthetics, drills and the
flexibility of performance in places outside the dental office as schools, providing accessibility to children with higher risk and need, avoiding future traumas (29).

Study (30) cites that there is little dissemination of ART in the area of public health, suggesting the ignorance of the technique among professionals, operationality, and its effectiveness.

The educators of this study showed approval of this method of curative treatment for the control of dental caries.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The perception of the educators in relation to the impacts of the educational and preventive activities carried out in the school was very positive, when they observed a change in the behavior of the children, who showed themselves to be more careful with their oral hygiene and stopped using the pacifier. They understood the importance of preserving and maintaining deciduous teeth to preserve permanent teeth, contributing to general health. Also, they were in favor of the use of ART treatment technique in children, due to its effectiveness, being atraumatic, promoting acceptance of dental treatment, and being of easy access.
REFERENCES


