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Oral health education and training for nursing staff in residential aged care facilities

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Introduction: Globally, the number of people aged 60+ years is estimated to grow rapidly in the next few decades. In Australia, many residents admitted to residential care have poor oral health. Although oral hygiene is an important aspect of maintaining oral health and quality of life, oral hygiene and care in residential care can be poor. Providing oral health education and training for aged care workers can improve oral hygiene and care for residents. Consequently, the 'Better Oral Health in Residential Care' (BOHRC) Training was rolled out nationally to Residential Aged Care Facilities in 2010.

Aim: The aim of this paper was to examine experiences of aged care staff in the provision of oral health care to residents, the BOHRC Training and their current training needs.

Methods: A qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was conducted with 20 participants (18 nurses and 2 care assistants) across Tasmania, Australia. Interview data was thematically analyzed using Nvivo 10.

Results: Participants reported that a lack of time and oral health training, competing priorities and workload were major barriers to providing good oral health care to residents. They valued the resources and materials provided by the BOHRC Training. However, the program had limited impact on oral health service provision at their facilities over time. The participants preferred practical, hands-on, paid training delivered on site at least every 12 months.

Conclusions: Regular, paid and on-site training for nursing staff in oral health care is recommended in order to improve oral hygiene and care provision to residents.

Biography

Ha Hoang has completed her PhD from the University of Tasmania (UTAS), Australia. Since graduated from a PhD study in 2012, she has been working full-time as Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Rural Health (CRH), School of Health Sciences, UTAS. She has published more than 30 papers in respected journals in health services research in the last five years.

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