

Effectiveness of One-on-One Oral Health Training for Hospitalized Geriatric Patients

Okugawa Atkinson*

Department of Biology, Al-Baha University, Al-Baha 65779, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Oral health is an integral part of overall well-being, particularly among geriatric patients who are often at a higher risk for oral diseases due to various physiological and lifestyle factors. Aging brings numerous changes to the body, many of which affect the oral cavity and its functions. Issues such as dry mouth, tooth loss, gum disease, and impaired motor skills can complicate oral hygiene routines for the elderly. For hospitalized geriatric patients, these challenges are amplified by their conditions, medications, and sometimes cognitive impairments. In this context, one-on-one oral health training can serve as a vital intervention for hospitalized elderly individuals. This approach involves personalized, hands-on training tailored to the unique needs of the patient, taking into account their physical, cognitive, and emotional conditions. It offers an opportunity for healthcare providers, particularly dental professionals and nurses, to educate patients and caregivers about the importance of oral hygiene and effective techniques for maintaining oral health in a hospital setting [1].

Moreover, older adults frequently take multiple medications, many of which can contribute to dry mouth (xerostomia), reducing saliva production and creating an environment conducive to the growth of harmful bacteria in the mouth. This makes them more susceptible to oral diseases and complicates the maintenance of oral hygiene. Therefore, educating elderly patients and their caregivers about proper oral care practices is an essential part of their healthcare [2].

Description

Oral health is often overlooked in geriatric care, yet it is a critical aspect of a person's overall health, especially for the elderly who may have multiple chronic conditions. Oral health problems in the elderly can contribute to a range of systemic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory infections. Poor oral hygiene can lead to the development of gum disease (periodontal disease), tooth decay, and oral infections, all of which can adversely affect nutritional intake, quality of life, and general health. Research indicates that oral health problems in the elderly are not just about discomfort but can significantly impact their physical and mental health. For hospitalized geriatric patients, who often suffer from frailty, multiple illnesses, and limited mobility, maintaining good oral hygiene is a particular challenge. These patients are at an increased risk for developing oral infections like pneumonia, which can complicate their recovery and prolong hospital stays [3].

One-on-one oral health training is a personalized approach that allows healthcare providers to address the unique needs of each patient. For hospitalized geriatric patients, this approach involves direct interaction between the healthcare provider and the patient, focusing on personalized oral care education and hands-on instruction. The healthcare provider begins by

assessing the patient's oral health, identifying any existing issues such as dry mouth, gum disease, tooth decay, or other dental concerns. This assessment helps tailor the training to the specific needs of the patient. The healthcare provider educates the patient about the importance of oral hygiene, explaining how proper brushing, flossing, and other oral care techniques can prevent complications. For patients with limited dexterity or cognitive impairments, alternative strategies (e.g., using an electric toothbrush or mouthwashes) may be recommended. A key element of one-on-one oral health training is teaching patients the correct techniques for brushing and flossing. In some cases, patients may need assistance or adaptive devices to help them clean their teeth effectively. The training also covers other aspects of oral hygiene, such as the use of denture cleaners, tongue scrapers, and how to keep the mouth moist to alleviate dry mouth symptoms. For many hospitalized geriatric patients, family members or caregivers play a crucial role in helping maintain oral hygiene. One-on-one training often includes educating caregivers about how they can assist the patient with oral hygiene routines, ensuring that the elderly individual receives consistent and effective care [4].

Personalized oral health training leads to better oral hygiene practices, reducing the incidence of gum disease, tooth decay, and other oral health issues. Hospitalized elderly patients who receive this training are more likely to maintain cleaner mouths, resulting in fewer infections and complications related to poor oral hygiene. One-on-one training enhances patients' understanding of the importance of oral hygiene and empowers them to take an active role in their own oral health. Educated patients are more likely to adhere to oral hygiene recommendations, which in turn improves their overall health outcomes during their hospital stay and post-discharge. Geriatric patients, particularly those who are elderly or frail, may feel overwhelmed by their health conditions. One-on-one oral health training provides a supportive and encouraging environment that motivates patients to care for their oral health. Personalized guidance fosters a sense of self-efficacy, leading to increased engagement in their care. Proper oral hygiene helps prevent systemic complications that can arise from untreated oral infections, such as pneumonia, sepsis, and cardiovascular disease. By preventing these complications, one-on-one oral health training may contribute to shorter hospital stays and improved recovery rates. Every geriatric patient has unique oral health challenges. One-on-one training allows healthcare providers to adapt their approach to each patient's specific needs, whether that involves addressing dry mouth, cognitive decline, or physical limitations. This personalized approach ensures that patients receive the care they need to maintain oral health [5].

Conclusion

One-on-one oral health training is an effective intervention for hospitalized geriatric patients, offering numerous benefits for both patients and healthcare providers. It plays a crucial role in improving oral health outcomes, enhancing patient knowledge, and preventing systemic complications. Personalized oral health education enables healthcare providers to address the specific needs of elderly patients, taking into account their unique physical, cognitive, and emotional conditions. Additionally, involving caregivers in the training process ensures that patients continue to receive support even after discharge. Despite its challenges, such as resource limitations and time constraints, one-on-one oral health training is a promising approach for improving oral health among hospitalized geriatric patients. By integrating oral health training into the care plans of elderly individuals, hospitals can help prevent complications, enhance recovery, and improve the quality of life for their patients. Going forward, efforts should be made to standardize and integrate oral health education into routine care practices for geriatric patients in hospital settings to ensure optimal health outcomes.

*Address for Correspondence: Okugawa Atkinson, Department of Biology, Al-Baha University, Al-Baha 65779, Saudi Arabia; E-mail: okaugawatkinson@nns.sa

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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