

Improving Oral Health for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Objectives: Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) have a high frequency of multiple health complications including poor oral health. Many I/DD individuals receive dental coverage during the federal Medicaid program Early Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) coverage until the age of 18 but not thereafter. The cumulative financial burden of adults with I/DD seems to be correlated with negative oral health outcomes. The purpose of this study was to gain information on the current dental health care status of adults with autism and their barriers to accessing dental care.

Method: I/DD individuals older than 18 years old completed a 34-question online survey through Qualtrics.

Results: 88.89% of the survey participants were self-advocates (adults with I/DD), and 11.12% of participants are family members or caregivers filling out the survey for individuals with I/DD. Surveyed participants were 44.44% male and 55.56% female. 88.89% live at home and 11.11% live in group homes, 44.44% are aged 18-30 and 50% are aged 31-50 and 5.56% of participants were older than 51 years old. 7.5% reported restorative dental care. 64.7% reported brushing 5-7 times a week, while 23.5% reported brushing 2-4 times and 5.9% brushing only once or less. 43.8% reported hyposalivation. 16.67% reported having difficulty breathing through one or both nostrils. 53.33% of participants notice bleeding gums when brushing or flossing.

Conclusion: Our results confirmed that adults with I/DD report a higher frequency of multiple oral health complications. Data collected from this tool is intended to determine the social determinants of health for dental treatment for adults with I/DD. Secondly, we hope to reduce the barriers to care for this population. Ultimately by comparing the viewpoints of patients and dentists in the treatment of this population we hope to achieve better oral health outcomes for adults with I/DD.

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