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Asnani project: A preventative oral health program targeting school children in Qatar

Najat A J S Alyafei

Preventative Oral Health Services, Qatar

Background: Recent studies revealed that Qatar has one of the highest prevalence figures of dental caries worldwide, especially among young children (89%) (1,2). Therefore, one of the State's national strategies to tackle this issue was to expand the old school oral health program (SOHP) which was accommodating only first and fourth grade of primary school students, to a more comprehensive program, including all levels of school children in public kindergartens and governmental schools in Qatar. The program is sought to reduce the oral disease burden by integrating educational, preventive and curative approach.

Methods: The program is targeting 130,000 students, and utilizes mobile dental clinics, operated by dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants to outreach students at schools. Students will receive oral hygiene instructions, full mouth screening, preventative dental treatment (topical fluoride & fissure sealants) and will be referred for dental treatment if needed. All clinical findings are recorded electronically, including full dental charting and DMFT/dmft index. The project has been piloted in Feb-Mar, 2018. Three schools were selected (two primary schools – one for boys and one for girls - and one KG for boys) with 700 students included in the pilot.

Results: Dental caries prevalence was 82.4%, and the mean DMFT was 5.8. Around 51% of the students had DMFT > 5, 22% had DMFT between 3 and 5 and 14% had DMFT ≤ 2. Moreover, 95.2% received topical fluoride, and 28.5% received fissure sealant.

Implications: In line with the National Primary Health Care Strategy in Qatar, which stresses on implementing more preventative dental services, the new |Asnani SOHP aims to reduce the state's burden of oral disease, increase community awareness about the importance of oral health prevention and improve access to dental services.

Conclusion: The new Asnani SOHP integrates both primary health care and educational institutes in order to deliver efficient and high standard preventative dental service, where oral health education, prevention, and treatment take part in reducing oral disease burden among school children.

Biography

Najat Alyafei is the Head of Preventative Oral Health Services of the Primary Healthcare Corporation, a member of the National Oral Health Committee (NOHC) and the Program Manager of the School Oral Health Program tagged Asnani (My Teeth) in Qatar. In addition, she was the first and only Qatari senior dental hygienist working at Hamad Medical Corporation until 2016. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene from King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and Master of Science degree in Education, Administration, and Dental hygiene at Old Dominion University, Virginia, USA. Currently, she is a PhD candidate at Bangor University, United Kingdom and her PhD research is focussed on dental caries behavioural prevention strategies for primary school children in Qatar.

nalyafei@phcc.gov.qa

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