

Oral health status: A comparison between prison inmates and public in the area of Dammam and Khobar

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Background: The oral health status of prisons' inmates is inferior to that of the population. A less-than-optimal dental services are offered to prisons inmates, as indicated by the perceived treatment needs surveys. Prisons' inmates compared with dentate non-institutionalized adults had 8.4 times the amount of untreated decay but similar numbers of missing teeth. Higher DMFT was found among older inmates, inmates having higher plaque index, and inmates with a lower frequency of a tooth brushing habit. The previous studies are indicating also a lack in the dental awareness in prison inmates when compared to the general population. In some international studies, 69.8% of the inmates were smokers; and 96.9% had history of alcohol consumption, of which 45.4% were heavy drinkers. We were not able to access any data or literature regarding the inmates and their oral health conditions in Saudi Arabia. In this study, we aimed to assess the oral health status in the prisons inmates in Saudi Arabia.

Materials and Methods: Eighty-two adult prisoners from two different prisons in Dammam and Khobar were examined and compared to another 79 non-institutionalized adults from the same geographic area. DMFT index was used to assess caries severity in addition to a structured interview to collect demographic data, exposure to risk factors and other variables.

Results: Inmates experienced more pain (87.8%) than the control group (49.4%) ($P < 0.0001$). 97.6% of the inmates reported that they need dental treatment, whereas 70.9% of control group reported so ($P < 0.0001$). Both groups complained about bleeding upon brushing ($P = 0.98$). The mean DMF score in the prison group was significantly higher than the control group ($P < 0.001$) (10.35 and 6.71 respectively).

Conclusion: More dental services need to be offered to inmates. Educational & preventive programs need to include inmates in their target population. Smoking cessation programs can be offered to them, in addition to free oral hygiene tools to minimize exposure to risk factors. Setting fully equipped dental units within prisons' facilities would be more practical and effective in enhancing dental health within inmates. Instead of moving them to outside health facilities, and all the logistics and security difficulties that may come along that.