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Evidence-Based Rationale Supports a National Periodontal Disease Screening Program

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Introduction

The evidence-based decision-making process that led to the inclusion of periodontal diseases (PD) in the newly revised Austrian National Periodic Health Examination (PHE) is described. Although intraoral inspection by physicians had already been a routine part of the PHE, obvious signs of PD, which are highly prevalent in Austria, have been largely ignored.

Objective

The objectives of this periodontal screening (PS) program are to direct persons with a series of identifiable risk factors to seek proper care.

Method

The PS program development methodology was based on 2 factors: a systematic review of evidence-based publications that establish correlations between individual risk factors or multifactorial risk models with an increased susceptibility to progression of PD, and a selection of brief and cost-effective screening interventions that could be administered by nondental clinicians such as general physicians.

Results

The final screening model is a 3-step intervention: Step 1 combines an evaluation of systemic and behavioral risk factors based on patient histories; Step 2 uses the results of self-reports by patients on their perceived clinical symptoms; and Step 3 uses the results of a brief intraoral screening assessment estimating the presence of disease.

Conclusion

The final PS model within the Austrian PHE is based on a wealth of data justifying an evidence-based intervention. The Austrian population is likely to benefit in many ways from the intervention through increased awareness of PD and through a collaboration of medical and dental clinicians in their prevention.

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