

Dental Care and Associated Factors among Older adults with Schizophrenia

Objectives: There are little data available on dental care in older adults with schizophrenia. The aim of this study is to examine the prevalence of dental care and factors related to dental treatment among older persons with schizophrenia.

Methods: The sample consisted of 198 community dwelling persons aged 55 and over with schizophrenia and matched group of 113 persons in the general community. Subjects received a 2 ½ hour interview that included various instruments assessing psychiatric, physical, cognitive, social, and functional status. We used an adaptation of Krause's Model of Illness Behavior in Later Life as the scaffolding on which to select 17 predictor variables.

Results: There were no differences between the schizophrenia and the community comparison in the percentage of persons who had seen a dentist in the past year (48% and 54%, respectively). However, there were significant differences in the percentage of persons who stated that they had problems with their teeth or dentures (41% and 23%, respectively). When separately examining the schizophrenia group, we found that 7 variables were significant in bivariate analysis. However, only 2 variables--better executive cognitive functioning (OR=1.07) and fewer perceived problems with teeth/dentures (OR=2.85) --were significantly associated with seeing a dentist at least once annually.

Conclusions: Older adults with schizophrenia do not receive the recommended level of dental care, although they are no worse than their age peers; however, they report more problems with their teeth/dentures. Further exploration is needed as to why the latter group is not seeking care. Also, identifying persons with more cognitive difficulties may increase dental visits.