

A systematic review investigating patient knowledge and awareness on the association between oral health and their systemic condition

Sabrina Akl, Madusha Ranatunga, Sharron Long, Ernest Jennings, Alan Nimmo

Abstract

Background

The prevalence of the oral-systemic relationship has accounted for potentially preventable chronic conditions and morbidity worldwide. Health literacy is a large contributing factor. This systematic review investigates the knowledge and awareness of patients with major systemic conditions, regarding the oral associations to their condition.

Methods

Electronic databases including Medline (Ovid), CINAHL, The Cochrane Library, Web of Science, Informit Health Databases and Scopus were searched. All articles from 2011 to 2020, investigating knowledge of the oral-systemic link, of adult patients with the following major system conditions were searched: diabetes mellitus (DM), respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease (CVD), pregnancy and bone disease. Two independent reviewers completed screening, data extraction and quality assessment. A synthesis without meta-analysis was conducted. Twenty-four studies, from 14 different countries, were included in the systematic review.

Results

Analysis showed that globally, patients with major systemic conditions have poor knowledge and awareness (< 50%) of the oral health associations to their condition. Improvements in health education are particularly necessary for patients with heart disease, bone disease and diabetes. Dentists and the media were the most common source of information. There were no relevant studies investigating the knowledge of patients with respiratory disease.

Conclusion

To improve the global burden of preventable chronic conditions, it is essential to address inequalities in the dissemination of health education to at-risk populations. Improvements in patient education rely on an increase in patient-practitioner communication on the oral-systemic link, implementation of oral health educational programs and greater interdisciplinary collaboration.