



FESTIVAL OF CONTAGIOUS IDEAS 2016



NEW SOUTH WALES
HEALTH INNOVATION
Symposium 2016

Preventive Health

Healthy Smiles Healthy Kids Sydney Local Health District

Challenge

Dental decay and childhood overweight and obesity are significant public health burdens. One in two Australian children have dental decay and one in four Australian children are either overweight and/or obese. Both these chronic conditions share common risk factors such as poor diet, socio-economic conditions, and limited health literacy.

To address these issues, a unique initiative named as “Healthy Smiles Healthy Kids” was set up in 2010. The overarching goal of the current application was to improve the oral health literacy of socio-economically disadvantaged parents with young children.



Solution

To address the complex needs of this community, an innovative promotion

package was developed and piloted in partnership with disadvantaged and culturally diverse families. It involved multi-disciplinary partnerships to promote maternal and child oral health literacy by improving early childhood feeding practices, disseminating linguistically/culturally suitable promotion material, providing free dental check-ups and treatment referrals.

Results

Results showed significant improvement in maternal oral health knowledge and practices, utilisation of child dental services (75 per cent after three years; 65 per cent after six years), and oral health-related quality of life.

Mothers have reported better oral health knowledge (80 per cent) and are in a better capacity to maintain their own and their child's oral health by making informed decisions (70 per cent). Only 10 per cent of children were reported to have dental decay by age 2.5-3.5 years and 15 per cent by age four-five years (significant improvement since a national survey reported 45 per cent children of similar age have dental decay). Since the program is heavily



prevention focussed, only 10 children out of 1036 needed restorative treatment/referral at age three years.

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