Title: The relationship between oral health and nutrition in older people

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Abstract: Introduction: There is a multidirectional association between nutrition and oral health. Oral diseases such as dental caries and periodontal disease compromise the condition of teeth and supporting tissues, which, in turn, impacts food choice, nutritional intake, and quality of life. Conversely, nutritional status affects the development and progression of oral diseases. This interaction is particularly important in older adults, because elders are at increased risk for both poor nutritional status and oral health problems.

Results: Oral function in older individuals is influenced by two key variables:
- the number and distribution of remaining natural teeth
- the quantity and quality of saliva present.

Older people tend to have fewer natural teeth and there are higher rates of edentulism and changes seen in salivary composition and flow rates with disease and drug use. These conditions have an impact on an individual’s diet as a consequence of inadequate chewing ability.

As masticatory efficiency reduces, people choose not to eat foods that are difficult to chew for example fruit and vegetables. The level of non-starch polysaccharides (dietary fibre) intake that thought to be important in terms of prevention cancer and cardiovascular disease is reduced.

Conclusion: There are complex interactions between nutrition and oral health. These have the potential to result in both increased oral disease and life-threatening systemic illness.

Key words: Nutrition, oral health

Presentation: Poster