Oral Health Care Issues in Nursing Facilities for the Elderly Identified in a Workshop for Care Workers

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Abstract: Oral health care is an important and significant facet of nursing and welfare in Japan, but many facilities suffer from problems in delivering this care. The purpose of this study was to define those factors that limit the delivery of oral health care in nursing facilities for the elderly.

A seminar with a workshop was offered for staff in nursing facilities for the elderly in Fukuoka, Japan on 14 December, 2009. The 67 participants were divided into 11 groups and asked to report the difficulties they experienced in caring for their patients’ oral health. We used the KJ method to identify problems in oral health care in these facilities, and the importance and urgency of these problems were then ranked using a two-dimensional expansion method. After analyzing 11 products, 69 codes were defined in decreasing order of relevance. The most relevant were “rejection of care”, “lack of experience (knowledge/skills) among staff”, “dentures”, “deterioration of oral function” and the most important and urgent was “no assessment and no basic manual”. Having identified the major barriers to delivering good oral health care to elderly patients, we encourage dentists and dental hygienists to collaborate with workers in the nursing and welfare fields to formulate strategies to overcome these pressing issues.

Because the information given by nursing care staff might help dental professionals to understand the problems associated with delivering oral health care in nursing facilities, we consider that workshops for nursing care staff are of significant benefit in promoting the interactive exchange of information, creating an integrated and cooperative relationship between staff in the nursing and dental fields.

Key words: Oral health care, Nursing facility, Elderly, Workshop, Interactive exchange of information

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