

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Use of the Mobile Phone alarm Features to Improve Dental Hygiene among School Children

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study is to try and investigate how mobile phone alarm features can help in the reduction of dental health in school going children. Dental health is equally as important as the general health, if not more important, and this is especially in school going children. It has often been indicated that school going children are more vulnerable to certain dental diseases such as plaque and tooth decay. Though this is true, consideration of proper dental care should limit these diseases. The effects of dental diseases in these children can go beyond their self-esteem and morale and into the classroom. At this point, the performance may be affected and can, later on, translate to the life of adulthood. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to determine the various, methods and techniques through which dental diseases and discomforts may be prevented. The use of mobile phone alarm feature is one technique that is still up for debate and it is the main focus of this essay. The various methods and ways through which mobile phone alarm features can be used in improving dental health hygiene will be determined.

KEYWORDS: Mobile phone, Alarm, Dental Hygiene, Children, check up

INTRODUCTION:

It has often been stated that oral health is important to the general health and basically to the well-being of any individual. A healthy mouth gives any individual the confidence to speak, socialize and take meals without any experience of discomfort, pain or embarrassment. The most common types of dental diseases are periodontal and dental carries which basically begin at childhood and can progress to adulthood if not properly treated¹. The statistical analysis behind this indicates that there is the likelihood of 90% of school-children to suffer from oral diseases². Though it might seem like a minor issue, study suggests that because of dental diseases: affected children are 12 times more likely to be restricted from daily activities than healthy children and, the children's performance, which translates to the future success, is affected because 50 million class hours are lost³.

Adverse effects such as those of tooth decay affect children at a greater scale because children's teeth are relatively thinner, and hence a thinner enamel as compared to adults subsequently making the erosion work faster⁴. That said, the main causes of dental diseases include lack of proper dental knowledge and overconsumption of foods that are particularly rich in carbohydrates and sugars³.

On to another aspect, this century has been described as the technological era. This is because there has been a boom in the use of technology in the past couple of decades with the mobile phone gaining much more attention in our daily lives. One of the important features of a mobile phone are the documents, alarms, memo, stop watches, calendars which help for organizational purposes⁵.

Prevention is always better than cure and because the diseases are caused mainly by lack of knowledge, and to some extent ignorance, awareness and proper maintenance of dental health can ensure that school going children are not affected. The major emphases are school based dental care and dental awareness in

school⁶. It is in this view that we come to discuss the relevance of this essay: The main aim of this essay is to try and describe how the use of mobile phone alarm features can help improve dental hygiene among school children

Mobile Phone Alarm Features:

The alarm feature that comes with the mobile phone is based on two factors; time and duration⁷. The feature enables the user to keep track of his/her time and duration and is an effective way to ensure that time is observed. Furthermore, the alarm is associated with the schedule feature that comes with the mobile phone. A scheduling feature simply means that all events that are scheduled by the user can be in put to the phone which will subsequently trigger the alarm feature when the time or day eventually reaches⁷.

METHODOLOGY:

Considering that school going children are more susceptible to the various kinds of dental diseases, the first thing is to understand the scope of the diseases going to be investigated. This can be a plaque, toothache, etc. In turn, the focus is shifted towards a specific disease. In this research, the dental diseases that were focused on include canker sores, tooth decay, and dental plaque. Three groups of school going children were used in this research. The first group was subjected to schedule and timed dental cleaning and check-up basically through the mobile phone alarm feature. The second group is subjected to irregular cleaning and check-up while the third group is not subject to any cleaning and check-up.

RESULTS:

In all the dental diseases, children who used the mobile phone alarm feature to ensure regular and scheduled cleaning had a higher level of dental health. This is because these children were subjected to regular dental check-ups and their dental health was significantly very good. The other group that was subjected to irregular cleaning shows signs of somehow good dental health but some minor dental diseases were observed to be present. Finally, the last group that was not subject to any scheduled cleaning or check-up showed the prevalence of dental diseases such as plaque.

DISCUSSION:

Tooth decay is one of the most common dental diseases and can be regarded as dental plaque on a higher scale. The infection begins when plaque formed by bacteria interacts with foods substances forming some sort of acid which eventually eats away the coating of the teeth. It is said that the acids attack the teeth for about 20 minutes after every meal⁸. This eating away of the enamel is what leads to tooth decay. The main factors

influencing decay include: not brushing or flossing the teeth on a regular basis, not going to a dentist for a check-up and cleaning regularly, eating foods high in sugar, smoking etc. In short, prevention and reduction of tooth decay involve check-up, flossing, and brushing of the teeth. The best method, therefore, is by scheduling regular cleaning and ensuring the child goes for scheduled check-ups. It is, therefore, worthwhile to note that a mobile phone alarm feature would come in handy regarding the scheduled regular cleaning and dental check-ups.

Dental plaque has been regarded as the most common dental disease. This is primarily so because its formation is natural⁹. It is of three types: above the gum line, below the gum line or along the gum line. Early removal of plaque is important to prevent the build-up which can consequently lead to the formation of tartar⁴. The disease is mainly caused by irregular and/or no cleaning and irregular and /or no check up with a dentist. School going children are often involved in snacks which tend to build up bacteria in their mouth subsequently the formation of dental plaque. Dental plaque inhibits pathogens such as porphyromonas gingivalis, actinobacillus actinomycetemcomitans and tannerella for synthesis⁹. It is therefore wise to conclude that through frequent and/or scheduled brushing of teeth and regular check-up, there is a likelihood of a decrease in the prevalence of the disease. It is in this perspective of maintaining a regular schedule whereby the children will brush their teeth as per the mobile phone alarm. Furthermore, the regular dental check-up and care of children may require a reminder whereby the calendar, schedule and alarm clock features of the phone will be effective.

Finally, the last, but not least, is canker sores. These are basically small ulcers in the mouth or under the tongue and are caused by the children either biting the tongue or mouth. They can be as a result of stress, eating spicy foods, hormones, vitamins etc. It is in this context that they are basically not regarded as diseases but they affect the general dental health. Canker sores usually develop over a period of time and are regarded as non-contagious but may be painful to the effect that they may cause a child to miss out on school. One of the ways of treatment is through specific prescriptions by a dental expert. Considering that most people are in tight schedules and mainly forget about these prescriptions, the mobile phone alarm and schedules can be used as a prescription reminder.

RECOMMENDATION:

The statistical analysis indicating the effects of dental diseases in children cannot be disregarded. Though not many studies have been conducted on the relationship

between dental diseases and educational performance, it can be noted that children who suffer from dental diseases are more likely to miss school days particularly due to discomfort. The diseases may include canker sores, tooth decay, dental plaque among others. Therefore, since these diseases are caused primarily by poor dental health, it may be a good idea to use the mobile phone alarm system to ensure that check-ups and scheduled cleaning are efficiently done, irregular cleaning and check-up may not work as efficiently. In the long run, improving the dental hygiene of a child can improve the educational performance.

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