

A LIFELONG SMILE

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Applied Sciences Poster Presentation*

Abstract: Purpose:

A Lifelong Smile is geared towards educating nurses, nurse aides, and family members how to provide oral hygiene care for older adults with impairments. The topics covered will include oral cancer screening, oral hygiene aids, and individualized patient care.

Methods:

This project was conducted in a memory care assisted living facility at Chisholm Place in Wichita targeting the caregivers of senior residents sixty-five and older. The staff were asked questions throughout the presentation to gauge their understanding. For example: “Why is oral health important? Does it relate to systemic health?” Or “What are some things we can do for those who have dentures and need assistance taking care of them?” Afterward, the staff were asked the same questions again to see if their knowledge had increased.

Results:

After completing thorough research relating to oral hygiene in nursing homes, it was evident that dental neglect is prevalent in nursing homes. Residents are not receiving proper oral care due to a lack of knowledge among caregivers regarding oral health. It is evident that the success of our program lies in effectively delivering information to empower employees. Measuring the results of the presentation was done through two different methods. A verbal questionnaire was given before and after, as well as answering numerous queries from the staff. The results of the questionnaires reinforced the knowledge absorption of the faculty after the necessary information was presented.

Implications:

The lack of oral hygiene care given to older adults in nursing homes is due to the misunderstanding of oral health literacy. By giving an interactive and educational presentation, caregivers will be able to contribute to improved oral health among residents. Furthering the study may include revisiting Chisholm Place in 4-6 months to evaluate the progress of the suggested care.

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