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Item Type	Abstract
Authors	Pfaff, Cadence
Citation	Pfaff, Cadence. 2024. Educating rural high school seniors on continuing oral health. -- In Proceedings: 23rd Annual Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum. Wichita, KS: Wichita State University, p. 23.
Publisher	Wichita State University
Download date	2026-05-14 07:10:41
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/10057/27670

EDUCATING RURAL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ON CONTINUING ORAL HEALTH

Cadence Pfaff

*College of Health Professions
Social Sciences and Humanities Poster Presentation*

Abstract: Purpose: This project's purpose is to equip high school seniors in rural areas with oral health education to help them make an informed decision about their care in the future. Emphasis will be on oral hygiene instruction, nutrition, oral and systemic disease, and prevention.

Methods: The target population was high school seniors attending Harper County's Chaparral High School in Anthony, Kansas. Verbal questions were asked to the students to assess their initial level of knowledge about oral health-related subjects. A PowerPoint presentation, mouth models held by the presenters for demonstrations, and individual hygiene kits for the students that included floss, toothpaste, and a toothbrush, were all used to provide education. At the presentation's end, students' knowledge was found to have increased based on responses to verbal questions. The independent variable was the oral health education presentation, and the dependent variables were the knowledge levels of high school seniors regarding teeth care, nutrition, and preventive measures. The project conditions involved a one-time educational presentation to the target population.

Results: Pre and post tests were not able to be given due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) restrictions. This age group has a critical need for oral hygiene education. Through verbal responses from the target population, it was affirmed educational intervention is effective in positively influencing the knowledge and awareness of rural high school seniors' oral health.

Implications: An area of concern in young adults that could be further researched is the effects of their daily diets on the oral cavity. The presentation allowed brief time for the topic of making informed dietary and lifestyle choices with only one slide, but this could be expanded to directly relate to this population.

Faculty Mentor: *Natalie Delacruz*