



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **Dental Health Status, Health Seeking Behaviour, and Dental Care Needs of our Patients: A survey conducted in a General Out-Patient Clinic**

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#### **Introduction**

According to General Dental service, National Health Service in UK, regular 6-monthly dental check-up was recommended. However, the latest Thematic Household Survey conducted in 2013 showed only 29.0% of HK population checked their teeth regularly. However, various dental problems are not uncommonly encountered in GOPC setting. It is proposed that dental health care warrants more concern in our community.

#### **Objectives**

To study the prevalence of patients without regular dental checkup, and to investigate the reasons for not doing so. To assess patients' perceived dental conditions and their existing dental symptoms.

#### **Methodology**

This is a cross-sectional study conducted from October to December 2013, in the format of questionnaires. Patients aged 18-year-old or above, both female and male, were recruited randomly during their attendance to our clinic.

#### **Result**

168 patients in Cheung Sha Wan Jockey Club GOPC were interviewed. 81 were male and 87 were female. Majority(82.5%) of patients did not visit dentist regularly. Among those, 40.1% perceived there was no need, 31.4% stated cost as the main barrier, 18.2% revealed no knowledge about the accessibility to dental service. Other concerns included time, fear of dentist and fear of pain during dental procedure. 51 patients(30.4%) perceived their oral condition as 'Poor', among which, 86.3% of them did not have regular dental checkup. Over half(52.3%) of them were mainly concerned about the cost, while 29.5% did not know where dental service was available. 117 patients(69.6%) perceived their oral conditions as 'Good' or 'Normal'. 79.5% of them did not attend dentist regularly, among which, over half (54.8%)

believed there was no need to make it routinely. 20.5% had their teeth checked regularly but most of them(76.6%) had interval longer than 6 months. Patients were asked to report any existing dental problems. 40.5% self-reported 2 or more dental problems, with loosen/lost teeth being the commonest (39.3%), around one-fourth complained of toothache(25.6%) and hypersensitivity(24.4%). Other symptoms included gum bleeding(18.5%), halitosis(11.3%) and unfit denture(9.5%). Among those who perceived their oral health as 'Good'/'Normal', 34.2% actually reported no dental symptoms while 17.1% complained of 2 or more dental symptoms. However, for patients who perceived their oral health as 'Poor', over half of them(52.9%)had 2 existing dental symptoms, 11.8% even reported 3 or more dental symptoms. Patients aged over 70 were found to report more existing dental symptoms when compared with other age group. 37.9% of them reported 2 or more existing dental symptoms. This small-scale survey suggests that substantial proportion of patients we encounter in GOPC do not have regular dental checkup though the presence of dental problem among them was common. Despite having various dental problems, they do not seek proper dental management. Low awareness and poor insight on dental health, as well as the accessibility and cost of dental care services are main factors affecting their health seeking behavior. Poor dental health can lead to various physical and psychological sequelae. Enhanced public awareness on regular dental checkup and timely dental care attention through better health promotion and education is essential. Improved accessibility of affordable dental services, such as increase in public dental clinics and subsidized private dental care programme can surely benefit the community, especially the elderly and those at the lower socioeconomic class.