ORAL HEALTH AS PREVENTION

Primary and Secondary Strategies for Homeless Children and Adults

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Community Oral Health Programs
Community

Family & Adults

Youth

Child

Pediatric Dental Clinic at the Children’s Village

Stand Downs for Homeless Veterans

Special Patients Clinic

Clinics on Skid Row

Community Health Fairs

Children’s Outreach

Street Screenings
Engagement in Caring for the Homeless by Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry

1994
Started Health Fairs on Skid Row

1999
Established Dental Clinic at Union Rescue Mission to care for men, women and children

2000

2009
Established Dental Clinic as part of JWCH Institute’s CHC

2010
Became involved in Veterans Stand Downs

2012
Established Head Start and Early Head Start Outreach Programs

2014
Established Pediatric Dental Clinic as part of the Medical Village of LAC+USC

2015
Began monthly Street Screenings
THE ORAL HEALTH CONDITIONS OF THE HOMELESS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

I am homeless.... I did not have any money but I was in an emergency which required prompt ... treatment.

...patients are homeless, completely traumatized, destitute and with many of them unable to eat but soup or soft foods, not to say the shame of opening our mouths.

...(at the clinic) we found a bevy of ... smiling young doctors who made us feel completely and un-condescendingly at ease, reminding they were there to help us.
My treatment took months and consisted of many procedures....

Now, a year after my treatment, I remember them every time I eat, speak and smile as the friends they let me feel they are! Thank you.
What kind of problems can poor dental health cause?
SECONDARY PREVENTION

Parent enters rehab program, begins getting clean from alcohol and other drugs

Family returns to the street

inability to “stay clean” results in dismissal from the rehab program.

“self-medication” to deaden pain puts them in violation of tenets of rehab program

Pain from untreated oral infections no longer masked
HOMELESSNESS Secondary Prevention

Positive Impact on Education

Increasing Self-Esteem and Self-worth

Impact on Homeless Person

Promoting Entry into the Workforce

Enhancing Access to Multiple Resources
Students with toothaches in the past 6 months were 3.7 times more likely to have a GPA lower than the median compared with students without a recent toothache ($P < .001$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Toothache OR, (95% CI)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA &lt; 2.8</td>
<td>3.7x (1.8, 7.6)</td>
<td>$P &lt; .001$</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPA ≥ 2.8</td>
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High Risk Youth are more likely to experience homelessness.
“They (URM) could give me a nice haircut and new suit, and (helped with) a resume. But without my new smile, I didn’t feel like going to a job interview…. I am very grateful for your amazing help.”
Impact on Self-Esteem / Self-Worth

“Missing Teeth are both a source of pain and shame for the homeless. Their self-image is crushed…. "The best mental health clinic is the dental clinic.”

- URM CEO

“I can’t tell you how much it’s changed the way I present myself in public and in meeting new people and applying for jobs. My self-esteem returned, and I could smile. It just helped me tremendously.”

—James Hartley
UNIQUE PROGRAM ASPECTS

Team Work:
• Partnership with Suzanne Dworak-Peck Masters of Social Work Interns

Field Work:
• Oral Promotoras, dentists and hygienist teams

Goal:
• Work together to assist patients in accessing resources/overcoming barriers to services for individuals and for families
CHALLENGES

- **Instability of Funding**
  - Reliant on federal, state, local grants, private foundation grants, dental school contributions
  - Medicaid covered dental services fluctuate with State budget

- **Limited Service Network**
  - Few providers accept Medicaid for dental care
  - Low Medicaid Reimbursement
  - High rate of No-shows by patients

- **Patient Resource Issues**
  - Lack of Transportation
  - Child care issues
  - No time off work for appointments
OUR MISSION

To teach a new generation of oral health practitioners in a unique community-university collaboration, where training stresses community outreach.

To improve the oral health and overall wellness of underserved men, women and children, especially those who are homeless on Skid Row.

Direct provision of comprehensive dental care and referral coordination for health and social services.