

Understanding the Impact of Depression on Oral Health

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Author Note

Tahmia Urmi is a second year student at The City College of New York. She is majoring in Biology and is interested in the work of dentistry. This research was conducted for the purpose of understanding how the mind impacts our oral health as Tahmia favors the studies of Psychology and Biology. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tahmia Urmi, Contact: tahmiau@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between depression and oral health, examining how mental health disorders can impact dental hygiene and overall oral well-being. Depression affects an individual's lack of motivation to perform daily tasks, including oral hygiene routines. Data from experiments led in scientific journals will be analyzed to examine the progress of patients with both depression and dental diseases. The literature shows that depression often leads to neglect of self-care, including oral hygiene, due to various barriers. Key findings show that individuals with poor nutrition worsens dental problems and fewer teeth are associated with higher rates of depression. The research highlights the need for integrated healthcare approaches and consistent dental care routines to improve oral health outcomes for individuals with depression. As physicians become more aware of the impact mental health has on your dental health, it is assured that there will be different treatment approaches— holistic procedures. A few include routines and formatting habits, supplements, and social support groups. These holistic approaches not only aim to address the root causes of depression and promote overall well-being, but also allow patients options to treat their oral health outcomes.

Introduction

Currently, there are 792 million people suffering from mental health disorders, including depression. Depression affects people of all ages and is a leading cause of death globally. Individuals with depression experience a variety of symptoms which interrupts their day to day lifestyle. For example, a change in appetite may occur, increase in anxiety, and use of drugs.

With these side effects, the statistics of individuals who've lost their teeth, developed periodontitis and tooth decay has risen significantly. In cases of depression, anxiety, or stress, self-care may not be on the top of your priority list. Surprisingly enough, the first thing you may forget to prioritize is your hygiene, specifically in your oral health. Depression often leads to a lack of motivation to perform basic tasks, including brushing your teeth, eating properly, and visiting the doctor. This neglect can result in the accumulation of plaque, leading to tooth decay and gum disease. Regular dental visits and a consistent oral hygiene routine are especially important for those experiencing depression. Addressing depression through appropriate medical and psychological interventions is crucial for your overall well-being, including maintaining good oral health.

Methods

This study aims to explore the correlation between depression and dental health. Data will be collected from communities to examine the symptoms of patients suffering from both depression and dental diseases. The selection of literature will prioritize articles that include detailed methodologies and experimental data. By reviewing relevant articles, a comprehensive understanding of the significance of this research question for individuals globally will be developed. The literature search is conducted using Google Scholar, with keywords such as mental health, depression, oral health, and dental diseases, ensuring efficient and targeted data collection.

Discussion

To fully grasp the effects of depression, it's essential to consider its impact not just on the brain, but on the entire body. Depression amplifies emotions, particularly anxiety and self-confidence issues. The scientific journals, "Relationship between oral health and depression: data from the National Health Survey 2016–2017" and "Investigating oral health among individuals with depression: NHANES 2015–2016" explore the connection between depression and oral hygiene. Neglecting dental care can harm self-perception, as the lack of motivation leads to irregular oral hygiene practices. Research in these articles involved surveys of Japanese and Korean individuals suffering from both depression and dental diseases. Participants completed a self-care survey addressing their flossing, brushing habits, experience of tooth decay and discomfort, and dietary patterns. The findings revealed that individuals experiencing dental pain had a higher intake of carbohydrates and sugars. The studies also showed that the lack of social and personal support led to poor dental care, resulting in tooth decay and a decline in self-confidence. Both articles emphasize the influence of discomfort, self-esteem, and social support on the relationship between depression and dental diseases.

In addition, an article focused on the experiment taken in Korea called, "Access to Dental Care and Depressive Illness: Results from the Korea National Health Nutrition Examination Survey" discusses the importance and validity of the survey as it represents 40.7 million Koreans. The study surveyed a total of 5,976 participants aged 19 and older. A number of factors were identified and explored, including the primary reasons why participants with current depression were unable to visit the dentist even though they needed care. Many people didn't go

to the dentist because of financial reasons, distance to the dental office, work or school commitments, physical difficulties, health problems, childcare issues, fear of dental visits, and other reasons. The findings suggest that depression not only impacts mental well-being but also exacerbates obstacles to maintaining oral health, indicating a need for more integrated and accessible healthcare solutions for those affected by depression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research on the connection between depression and dental health has significant global implications. Any person of any age can suffer from depression. The aim is to explore access to dental care for individuals with and without depression, recognizing that physical, financial, and emotional barriers often deprioritize hygiene. Maintaining dental hygiene is crucial, and healthcare providers can support individuals by encouraging routine practices. For instance, brushing every morning before breakfast and flossing afterward can help establish consistency. Over time, these routines can become integrated into daily life, benefiting not only those with depression but also anyone struggling to maintain regular oral care. Promoting consistent dental care routines and ensuring better access to dental services for those with depression are crucial steps in improving their overall health and quality of life. By understanding and addressing these challenges, we can help those affected by depression maintain better oral health and, in turn, enhance their self-confidence and well-being.

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