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Oral health education for visually impaired children in Hong Kong

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Visually impaired children are challenged everyday in learning everyday skills, maintaining proper oral hygiene being one. Objectives: To provide an oral health education (OHE) program to visually impaired children in Hong Kong. Methods: Primary students studied in a school and home for the visually impaired were chosen as the subjects. The OHE program including an OHE talk and the instruction of toothbrushing stressed on the use of tactile sense and music and excluded the use of visual aids. The oral hygiene status using Visible Plaque Index (VPI) and Gingival Bleeding Index (GBI) of the children were examined before and after the OHE program. Results: In the clinical examinations, 43 students were examined. Results showed that there was a significant decrease in the mean full mouth VPI (Pre-OHE: 31.8%, Post-OHE: 18.2%, $p < 0.001$). Significant decreases in mean VPI at different regions of the mouth were also found ($p \leq 0.001$). A decrease in mean full mouth GBI was observed (Pre-OHE: 47.7%, Post-OHE: 42.8%), however it was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Conclusions: The OHE talk was well received and messages were effectively delivered. The instruction of toothbrushing to visually impaired children through a tailored method for their visual impairment was feasible and interesting for the children. There was an improvement in the oral hygiene status of the children after the OHE program with a significant decrease in the full mouth visible plaque percentage. Though the decrease in the gingival bleeding was not statistically significant, given a longer time and more reinforcements, the decrease might possibly be significant.

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