A VIBRANT Approach to Early Childhood Caries in Migrant Children

Organization:
Finger Lakes Community Health, Sodus, NY

Summary:
Early childhood caries (ECC) is a significant health problem for preschool, low income children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers impacted by numerous barriers to care. Prevention and management of ECC is best handled in a dental home model where comprehensive care can be provided in a continuously accessible, coordinated, and family centered approach. To address this goal, we have developed and successfully implemented an innovative multifaceted program to ensure these vulnerable children have the ability to establish and maintain a dental home.

The components of our VIBRANT Migrant Dental Home include the utilization of Videoconferencing and distance learning, Intraoral cameras for mobile oral health assessment, Bilingual/bicultural case managers, Remote care using mobile dentistry and telemedicine services, Access to pediatric dentists who treat ECC in office-based and outpatient surgery settings, New partnerships, Telepresence of a pediatric and general dentists to remote locations for interactive consultation and treatment planning.

Specifics of each VIBRANT component:

- **Videoconferencing**
  Live videoconferencing is used to assist dentists with evaluation of periodontal disease, behavioral observation, and discussion of treatment options with the family

- **Intraoral cameras and teledentistry**
  High definition intraoral cameras allow general dentists and pediatric dentists to conduct oral health and dental exams for the purpose of screening, specialty consultation, urgent care, and post-operative evaluation

- **Bilingual/bicultural community health workers (CHWs)**
  CHWs assess and address barriers to accessing follow up evaluations and treatment, reinforce patient education, and help families apply for insurance

- **Remote care using mobile dentistry**
  Mobile teams of dentists, hygienists, and assistants provide care in daycare centers, schools, Head Start programs, and residential homes for at-risk youth

- **Access to pediatric dentists**
  Pediatric dentists at Eastman Institute for Oral Health provide tertiary care consultation, coordination of care, and participate in monthly team care conferences with Finger Lakes dental providers and CHWs

- **New partnerships**
  Finger Lakes Community Health, in partnership with the National Center for Farmworker Health, has formed the National Farmworker Telehealth Network whose vision is to promote telemedicine and teledentistry in migrant health centers across the U.S.

- **Telepresence for consultation, distance learning, and treatment planning**
Telehealth applications have included using live videoconferencing for administrative meetings, team case conferences, mentoring, and educational workshops between the pediatric dentist and our CHWs as well as remote PowerPoint presentations about the program at local, state, and national farmworker health conferences.

Results:
This approach has produced positive results including a greater focus on ECC prevention, timely consultation with a pediatric dentist, and utilization of tertiary care dental services with high appointment compliance rates. This model of care has great potential for replication in other high risk, underserved communities.

Lessons Learned:
Successful planning for practice change involves participation from a team of administrative, clinical, IT, and outreach personnel who can work on operational details for program development and deployment. The telemedicine coordinator is key in fostering communication between team members and being the point person for quality improvement. Relying on change theory as part of the implementation, including setting clear vision and priorities, providing hands-on support to all staff involved in the clinical application, and prompt follow up of issues is necessary for buy-in and success.

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