



Oral Care Education to Junior and High School Students

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SUMMARY

Oral health is a critical component of general health. If the knowledge of oral health is lacking, the quality of life decreases not only in adults but also in children.^[1] For most of junior and senior high school students, it is likely that the “oral care” is difficult to understand. When the students visit dental office for treatment of their teeth, they cannot easily understand the contents of dental treatment and the importance of oral care. Indeed, it has been reported that among the senior high school students who visited dental office for treatment of dental caries and gingivitis, only half of the students received dental treatments.^[2] Therefore, the oral health education is very important for junior and senior high school students in order to increase the knowledge such as the dental caries and gingivitis. In a recent decade, many dental universities in Japan have been trying to have dental care classes in the junior and high school students in order not only to promote oral health care but also to teach contents of dental profession. In contrast to the dental universities, there are very few dental practitioners that have classes to junior and senior high school students in Japan. In the Shizuoka prefecture where our dental office is located, there are no dental universities. Thus, for junior and senior high school students in our prefecture, not only the evaluation of the current oral hygiene practices but also the dental care classes, which are conducted by dental practitioners, are very important for promotion of dental and oral health care. Fortunately, we have chances of giving classes of dental care to junior and high school students. So far, we have had eleven dental care classes in junior and high schools since 2012. In this editorial, we first introduce the contents of our classes. Second, we evaluated our dental classes through descriptions concerning impressions to our classes.

To attract the interests of students, our classes include several topics other than dental care as follows: (1) “How to become dentist” in Japan, (2) Basic medicine and clinical medicine, (3) The future course after graduation of dental universities, (4) Sports dentist, (5) Importance of dental examination, (6) Oral hygiene, (7) Modern dental procedures, and (8) Mastication and brain function. Our aim of the classes is to

to increase their health awareness and to change students' behavior. The classes also include contents designed to teach the importance of taking individual responsibility for health. After the classes, we evaluated the descriptions of impressions. We found that most of students had the impressions that "I was interested in the class" and "Teeth are important". When we asked the students, "which content was most interesting in our classes", most of the students were interested in the topic about sports dentistry. This is probably because most of students are engaged in sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball and swimming. It has been reported that during sports and exercise, the risk of dental caries and erosion increases in young athletes.^[3] Therefore, teaching the relationship between the risk of dental diseases and sports to not only students but also their parents and teachers is very essential. Before the classes, the students' awareness of dental care was relatively low. However, after the classes, most of students have begun to become interested in the dental care. Especially, the students have begun to be interested in brushing their teeth. Also, they began to be interested in taking care of their overall health as well as their oral health. Thus, we confirmed that the classes which we conducted were able to lead to promote health awareness and to positive behavioral changes. Therefore, we conclude that the dental care classes to junior high school students which are conducted by dental positioners are very useful to promote dental and oral health.

In August 2011, "The promotion of dental and oral health" was formulated in Japan.^[4] This is the first law to address that "Oral health plays a basic and important role in ensuring that people lead a healthy and high-quality life". This law provides guiding principles to promote the maintenance of oral health. In July 2012, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Japan have proposed "the basic matters related to the promotion of dental and oral health". At present, each local government is executing the policies related to the promotion of dental and oral health based on "the Basic Matters". To prevent oral diseases and bring up the development of oral function in junior and senior high school students, several issues are of serious concern. To achieve these issues, not only the development of the school health education but also the corporation of dentists are indispensable. Although our classes alone are not enough to promote oral health education in junior and high school students, they are useful as part of the dental health care in terms of the prevention, guidance and enlightenment. We will continue to our classes to junior and high school students in the future as well and would like to promote their oral health condition in order to overcome these problems.

CONCLUSION

In this editorial, we briefly introduced our dental care classes to junior and high school students. In the future as well, we will continue these classes and would like to contribute to prevalence and enlightenment of dental care to junior and high school students.

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