

**Title of Intervention:** The CARES Program

**Intervention Strategies:** Supportive Relationships, Group Education

**Purpose of the Intervention:** To decrease barriers and improve access to dental care

**Population:** Patients (children, lower income patients, uninsured patients, patients with medical/mental conditions) in the waiting rooms of oral health clinics

**Setting:** Oral health clinics; health care facility-based

**Partners:** School of Dental Medicine (SDM) and School of Social Work (SSW) at the State University of New York, Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo

**Intervention Description:**

- Supportive Relationships: In Year 1, participants were contacted by a social worker, who assessed and provided assistance for identified barriers to dental care. During Year 2, participants received four treatment sessions that consisted of progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, social skills training, identification and replacement of irrational/unhealthy belief systems attached to chronic pain, mind-body education and focus pain management skills. In Year 3, participants received assistance with minimizing barriers to oral health care four times by telephone, chair-side, in the CARES office or in a private setting.
- Group Education: In Years 2 and 3, outreach presentations were made to seniors in senior centers. The presentations discussed dental care needs, services offered and how social workers could assist them in obtaining oral health care. In Year 3, a social worker instructed two seminars: "Working with Older Adults" and "Communication Skills" and a course on "Behavioral Management of Dental Patients."

**Theory:** Not mentioned

**Resources Required:**

- Staff/Volunteers: Counselors, educators, oral health care providers
- Training: Training in CARES protocol
- Technology: Telephones
- Space: Community centers, private rooms for consultation
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Barriers assessment, education materials, music
- Evaluation: Patient records

**Evaluation:**

- Design: Cohort
- Methods and Measures:
  - Clinical records to measure the attendance of dental clinic patients

**Outcomes:**

- Short Term Impact: The CARES program retained a large number of patients, which implies that it was effective in reducing perceived barriers to dental care.
- Long Term Impact: Not measured

**Maintenance:** Not mentioned

**Lessons Learned:** Dental schools can collaborate with social work schools to establish a protocol and assistance program for dental patients who have difficulty accessing care.

**Citation(s):**

Zittel-Palamara, K., J. A. Fabiano, et al. (2005). "Improving patient retention and access to oral health care: the CARES program." *J Dent Educ* 69(8): 912-8.