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Parental perceived barriers toward young children's oral health-related behaviors among Chinese immigrant parents

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Background: Chinese immigrant children have higher decayed and filled primary teeth than their US counterparts. According to recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, child oral health-related behaviors are crucial factors for preventing dental caries. There is limited information regarding Chinese immigrant parents' barriers of assisting their children's oral health-related practices. Accordingly, this descriptive study provided new knowledge about parental barriers towards caries prevention.

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe Chinese parents' perceived barriers of young children's oral health-related behaviors (sweet consumption, tooth brushing, routine dental visits) within the Chinese immigrant family context.

Methods: Purposive and modified respondent-driven samplings were used to recruit Chinese immigrant parents of children aged 0-6 years through three Chinese immigrant agencies and participant referrals in King County, Washington. Participants completed in-person, semi-structured interviews that included perceived barriers of engaging in children's daily oral-health practices (sweet consumption, tooth brushing and routine dental visits). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Chinese and analyzed by two coders using content analysis.

Results: 46 parents participated in the study. Barriers to control children's sweet consumption included child factors (physical development, temperaments and diet habits), parent factors (parenting styles and skills), family factors (sibling influence, grandparents' care, family events and holidays), social factors (peer influence, events and holidays), and environmental factors (access to sweets). Barriers to assist children's oral hygiene practices included child factors (physical development and temperaments), parent factors (lack of oral hygiene knowledge and skills, parenting styles and skills, lack of time), family factors (sibling influence, grandparents' care and lack of family routine), and environmental factors (preschool's lack of brushing equipment and eat out). Barriers to take children for routine dental visits included parent factors (lack of time and schedule issue), family factors (lack of grandparents' support), and environmental factors (weather and transportation).

Conclusion: Caries prevention education and parenting skills is needed to facilitate parents' assistance roles in children's healthy snacks, oral hygiene practices, and regular dental visits. Health professionals should be informed about Chinese immigrant parents' barriers of promoting their children's oral health behaviors in order to understand parents better and provide culturally competent care.

Biography

Ching-Feng Chang is currently a Doctoral student at University of Washington in Seattle. She is also a senior Lecturer at Fooyin University in Taiwan since 1999. Her research interest focuses on parenting, premature care, and children's oral health.

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