

Oral health and job opportunities

Salute orale e opportunità di lavoro

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES. Oral diseases are a problem for individuals, society and for the public health system. In Latin America, the high cost of dental treatments leads health authorities to divert attention from oral illnesses and to consider them as luxury goods, when compared to other life-threatening diseases. However, dental health far exceeds the healthcare dimension and often involves issues affecting the social life of individuals, such as the employment world. The aim of the present study is to evaluate the relationship between job opportunities and dental health status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS. The authors conducted a prospective study. Variables analysed were missing teeth, socioeconomic status and ranking during job selection process. After stratified two-stage randomized selection of young adults, volunteers were included in the study. Three sets of folders were prepared, each one made up of the CVs of 20 candidates (10 CVs of volunteers with complete dentition photograph, 5 CVs of candidates with missing teeth; and 5 CVs of candidates, whose images had been digital-

ly modified in order to include missing teeth). All CVs had similar personal data, background, and skills. Human resources managers from 300 entities were asked to rank candidates from each folder. A multivariate analysis was performed by associating all variables.

RESULTS. Subjects with missing teeth ranked in the lowest positions. Although the capabilities and skills presented in their CVs were equivalent, candidates who did not have a complete dentition, were average rated in 15.5 ± 4.1 position in a 20 candidates ranking list. Strong association was observed between rejection of job application and missing teeth ($p = 0.003$).

CONCLUSIONS. The significance of teeth health goes well beyond aesthetics or nourishment function; it plays a strategic role as a key element for labour inclusion. A complete dentition means better opportunities for job applicants. Public health policies should aim to cut the vicious circle in which socioeconomic vulnerable communities are imprisoned, and to guarantee their access to oral care and prevention.

KEY WORDS

- ▶ Oral health
- ▶ Oral disease
- ▶ Dental treatments
- ▶ Job opportunities
- ▶ Social life

RIASSUNTO

OBIETTIVI. Le malattie della bocca rappresentano un problema per le persone, la società e i sistemi sanitari pubblici. In America Latina l'alto costo dei trattamenti odontoiatrici distoglie l'attenzione da tali malattie, che le autorità sanitarie considerano un bene di lusso se comparate con altre malattie potenzialmente letali. Tuttavia la salute orale va oltre i problemi sanitari, essendo coinvolta in aspetti relativi alla vita sociale dell'individuo, quali per esempio quelli legati al mondo del lavoro. Scopo del presente articolo è valutare l'associazione tra le opportunità di lavoro e lo stato di salute dentale.

MATERIALI E METODI. È stato condotto uno studio prospettico. Le varia-

bili esaminate sono state: denti mancanti, stato socioeconomico, posizione ottenuta nelle graduatorie durante il percorso di selezione lavorativa. Dopo una selezione casuale stratificata a due stadi, alcuni volontari sono stati inclusi nello studio. Sono stati preparati tre gruppi di cartelle, ognuna composta dai CV di 20 candidati (10 CV di candidati volontari con dentatura completa e relativa fotografia, 5 CV con la fotografia di candidati con denti mancanti e 5 CV corrispondenti a candidati per i quali la fotografia era stata modificata digitalmente per includere i denti mancanti). Tutti i CV erano simili per dati personali, esperienze e abilità. È stato chiesto ai responsabili delle risorse umane di 300 società e istituzioni di classificare i candidati di ogni cartella. Un'analisi multivariata è stata realizzata associando tutte le variabili.

RISULTATI. I candidati con denti mancanti sono stati collocati agli ultimi posti. Anche se le competenze e le capacità riportate nei CV erano equivalenti,

la posizione media dei candidati senza dentatura completa si è attestata a $15,5 \pm 4,1$ in una graduatoria di 20 candidati. Una forte correlazione è stata osservata tra il rifiuto all'assunzione e l'edentulia ($p = 0,003$).

CONCLUSIONI. La salute dei denti riveste un'importanza che va oltre l'estetica e la funzionalità, svolgendo un ruolo strategico per l'inclusione nel modo del lavoro. Una dentatura completa garantisce migliori opportunità di lavoro per i candidati.

Le politiche di sanità pubblica devono mirare a interrompere il circolo vizioso nel quale ricadono le comunità vulnerabili dal punto di vista socioeconomico, garantendo loro accesso alla prevenzione e alla cura dentale.

PAROLE CHIAVE

- ▶ Salute orale
- ▶ Patologia orale
- ▶ Trattamenti dentali
- ▶ Opportunità di lavoro
- ▶ Vita sociale

1. INTRODUCTION

Oral disease is a problem for individuals, society and for public health system [1]. Dental diseases have been reduced over the last decade in most developed countries, but this decline was not uniform in all countries [2].

Latin America still has severe health's problems that shorten life's expectations of some groups of the inhabitants located in these latitudes. It might be for this reason and also for the high cost of dental treatments that oral health has not a priority and is often considered a luxury

good for health's authorities when it is compared to other life threatening diseases [3].

Many of the oral diseases are preventable with an appropriated dental council and a change of habits in food and oral hygiene [4]. However, the delayed reaction of public policies towards this issue and the risk to oral diseases of social exclude population, frequently cause the lost of teeth elements [5].

Some authors associated the aesthetic characteristics of individuals and their economical succeed [6]. It might be then a vicious cycle, since access to dental

controls and treatments are also seen in socially wealthy population [7]. The aim of this study is to establish the impact of lack teeth in job's opportunities.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**2.1 TYPE OF STUDY**

Cross sectional study.

2.2 PATIENTS SELECTION

After a free complete health control provided by the University and the Minister of Health, 1,840 volunteers from both sexes, aged 18 to 30 years old, were invit-

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