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Effectiveness of a One Year Oral Health Educational and Preventive Program in improving Oral Health Knowledge and Oral Hygiene Practices of a Group of Autistic Egyptian Children and their Caregivers

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Background: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neuro developmental disorder characterized by severe damage in social interaction, language, behavior and cognitive function. **Aim:** The current study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a specially designated educational and preventive program for 1 year in reducing caries activity and preventing caries and periodontal diseases among group of autistic Egyptian children, also to assess the behavior of each child in every visit and to assess the effectiveness of a specially designated educational program in improving oral health knowledge, attitudes and oral practices of parents and caregivers of these children. **Basic research design:** Longitudinal field trial with before and after comparison. **Participants:** 30 Autistic Egyptian children (4-13years old) and their parents/caregivers. **Clinical setting:** Three academies for autism spectrum disorder, situated in Cairo, Egypt. **Interventions:** Phase I: Information of the Cariogram parameters (caries experience, diet content, diet frequency, plaque amount, mutans streptococci, fluoride program, saliva secretion and saliva buffer capacity) were collected, which were used to generate the individual caries profile, based on which the children were divided into 3 risk groups. Phase II: Risk based preventive program was implemented. Phase III: At the end of 12 months, caries profile was generated again. **Main outcome measures:** The effectiveness of the preventive program was assessed by comparing the baseline and follow-up caries profile for statistical analysis. **Results:** A statistically significant difference was found in Frankl's behavior scale between the three periods of testing, regarding caries activity and periodontal diseases, a statistically significant difference was found between before and after the preventive program, on assessing dental knowledge of caregivers before and after the program, results showed that a statistically significance difference was found between the percentage of caregivers in answering the questions with right answers before and after the program where a higher percentage answered the right answer after the program than before. **Conclusions:** Educational and preventive program was effective in improving the various caries risk factors and increasing the chance to avoid caries to autistic children and in increasing children and caregivers' dental knowledge.

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