

Review

Innovative Practices for Enhancing Patient Compliance with Oral Hygiene Regimens

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Abstract

Patient compliance with oral hygiene regimens is a significant factor in maintaining both oral and overall health, yet it remains a challenge for many individuals. Factors such as age, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and medical conditions play pivotal roles in shaping adherence to recommended oral hygiene practices. Behavioral interventions, including patient education and motivational interviewing, are effective in fostering long-term changes in oral care habits. Personalized education and reinforcement through regular follow-up visits have been shown to improve compliance, particularly when tailored to individual patient needs. Technological advancements, such as smart toothbrushes and mobile health applications, have transformed the monitoring and support of oral hygiene. These tools offer real-time feedback and reminders, enabling patients to track their progress and receive personalized recommendations. Tele-dentistry and AI-powered platforms further enhance patient engagement by providing remote consultation and early detection of potential oral health issues. Tailoring oral hygiene plans to diverse patient populations is essential in overcoming barriers to compliance. Age-specific needs, particularly in children and older adults, require targeted interventions that are both engaging and accessible. Socioeconomic challenges can be addressed by recommending affordable products and providing education on effective oral hygiene within limited means. Additionally, culturally sensitive approaches are crucial in educating patients from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that oral care recommendations are both understood and implemented. For patients with chronic health conditions, specialized oral hygiene regimens are necessary to prevent complications and align with their overall medical care. By addressing behavioral, technological, and demographic factors, healthcare providers can significantly enhance patient compliance with oral hygiene practices, leading to improved long-term oral health outcomes. The integration of personalized care, innovative technology, and patient-centered strategies remains key to achieving better adherence and sustained oral health.

Keywords: oral hygiene compliance, behavioral interventions, smart toothbrushes, tele-dentistry, personalized oral

Introduction

Oral hygiene plays a critical role in maintaining overall health, yet patient compliance with recommended oral hygiene regimens remains a significant challenge for healthcare providers. Poor oral hygiene can lead to a variety of dental conditions, including periodontal diseases, tooth decay, and systemic health problems like cardiovascular disease and diabetes (1). Despite advances in dental care and the increasing availability of oral hygiene tools, ensuring that patients adhere to their oral hygiene routines consistently is an ongoing issue that impacts dental health outcomes. Improving patient compliance with oral hygiene regimens is, therefore, a priority for dental professionals seeking to promote better oral and systemic health. Several factors contribute to poor compliance with oral hygiene, including lack of education, socioeconomic barriers, psychological factors, and inconsistent follow-up by healthcare providers (2). Patients often face challenges in understanding the importance of oral health, the correct use of hygiene tools, and the long-term benefits of maintaining consistent practices. Moreover, disparities in access to dental care further exacerbate these issues, making it even harder for individuals from underserved populations to adhere to proper oral hygiene regimens (3).

In response to these challenges, a variety of innovative practices have been introduced to enhance patient compliance. These include behavioral interventions aimed at fostering long-term habits, personalized hygiene plans tailored to individual needs, and the use of technology, such as mobile applications and reminders, to monitor and support patients' oral care routines (4). Dental professionals are increasingly focusing on patient-centered approaches that empower individuals to take control of their oral health, while also utilizing technological advancements to streamline care and provide constant engagement. This review will examine innovative practices aimed at enhancing patient compliance with oral hygiene regimens, with a focus on three key areas: behavioral interventions, technological innovations, and personalized care.

Review

Enhancing patient compliance with oral hygiene regimens requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both individual and systemic barriers. One of the most effective strategies is the implementation of personalized care plans that cater to the specific needs, habits, and lifestyle of each patient. Tailoring oral hygiene recommendations to fit the unique circumstances of individuals can significantly increase adherence. Research has shown that when patients receive personalized advice and tools, such as customized toothbrushes or targeted education on flossing techniques, they are more likely to maintain consistent oral care practices (5). This individualized approach fosters a sense of ownership over one's oral health, which can lead to improved long-term outcomes. Additionally, technological innovations are playing a crucial role in supporting patient compliance. Mobile applications, for instance, offer reminders for brushing and flossing, as well as tips for improving technique. These digital tools allow for continuous engagement with patients outside of the clinical setting, making it easier for them to stick to their oral hygiene routines (6). As technology continues to evolve, dental professionals can integrate these tools into routine care to help bridge the gap between clinical recommendations and at-home practices, thus fostering better oral health outcomes.

Behavioral Interventions and Education in Oral Hygiene Compliance

Behavioral interventions have become a cornerstone in promoting adherence to oral hygiene practices. These interventions often focus on altering patient behavior through education, motivation, and reinforcement, aiming to instill lifelong oral hygiene habits. Patient education is one of the most effective tools in influencing compliance. Studies have shown that when patients are educated on the consequences of poor oral hygiene, they are more likely to adopt healthier behaviors (7). This education should not be limited to just providing information about oral hygiene practices; rather, it should also involve the use of visual aids, demonstrations, and hands-on experiences to help

patients fully grasp the importance of maintaining good oral health.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is another behavioral strategy that has gained traction in dental care settings. MI is a patient-centered approach that helps individuals resolve ambivalence and reinforces their motivation to engage in healthier behaviors, such as regular brushing and flossing (8). By creating a non-judgmental and supportive environment, dental professionals can encourage patients to set realistic goals and commit to improving their oral hygiene practices. Research has demonstrated that patients who undergo motivational interviewing are more likely to improve their oral hygiene behaviors and maintain these improvements over time (8).

Reinforcement through follow-up appointments and regular feedback is also essential in promoting adherence to oral hygiene regimens. Regular dental visits not only provide opportunities for professional cleaning but also for reinforcing oral hygiene education. Dentists can assess the patient's progress, offer additional guidance, and adjust care plans based on individual needs. This ongoing reinforcement helps prevent patients from lapsing into poor oral hygiene habits. Furthermore, positive reinforcement, such as praise for adherence or visible improvement in oral health, can further motivate patients to continue their efforts (9). Incorporating behavioral science into dental care practices not only improves patient compliance but also addresses the psychological and emotional barriers that may hinder adherence. Patients who receive education tailored to their needs, combined with behavioral interventions like motivational interviewing and reinforcement, tend to exhibit better oral hygiene outcomes. These strategies highlight the importance of addressing patient behavior as part of a comprehensive approach to oral health, ensuring that compliance is maintained over the long term.

Technological Innovations for Monitoring and Supporting Oral Hygiene

Technological advancements have significantly transformed the approach to oral hygiene, offering

innovative solutions that improve patient compliance and enhance the ability of healthcare providers to monitor oral care. Smart toothbrushes, mobile health applications, tele-dentistry platforms, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools are among the key innovations shaping the future of oral hygiene management. These technologies not only bridge the gap between clinical recommendations and at-home care but also empower patients to take an active role in maintaining their oral health.

Smart toothbrushes equipped with sensors and Bluetooth connectivity are a prime example of how technology can enhance oral hygiene. These toothbrushes track brushing habits—such as frequency, duration, and pressure—and sync the data with mobile applications, providing real-time feedback to users (7). By monitoring their brushing techniques, patients can correct ineffective practices and develop healthier routines. Studies show that users of smart toothbrushes demonstrate significantly improved oral hygiene behaviors compared to those using manual toothbrushes (8). The personalized insights offered by these devices enable users to address specific problem areas in their routine, such as brushing too hard or missing certain regions of the mouth, ultimately leading to better oral health outcomes.

Mobile health applications (mHealth) also offer a dynamic approach to supporting oral hygiene. These apps help patients by sending reminders to brush and floss, offering educational tips, and tracking daily progress. Many of these applications allow users to set personal goals and monitor their achievements, adding a motivational aspect to their routine. Some apps even include gamification elements, such as earning badges or rewards for maintaining consistent habits, which can be particularly effective for engaging children and adolescents (9). The continuous interaction with these apps helps build long-term habits and provides patients with consistent guidance, enhancing their overall compliance with recommended oral care practices.

Tele-dentistry has emerged as another valuable technological tool, enabling patients to consult with

dental professionals remotely. This approach is particularly useful for individuals in remote or underserved areas, who may have limited access to traditional dental care services (10). Through tele-dentistry platforms, patients can receive professional advice, share photos of their oral condition, and get real-time feedback on their hygiene practices without needing to visit a clinic. This ongoing interaction fosters adherence to oral hygiene routines by allowing dental professionals to regularly monitor their patients' progress and provide tailored recommendations as needed. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also making its way into oral hygiene management. AI-powered tools can analyze images of a patient's oral cavity, identifying issues such as plaque buildup or early signs of gum disease, and offer personalized recommendations for addressing these problems (11). By detecting issues early, patients can make informed decisions about their care, potentially preventing more serious dental problems in the future. The integration of AI in oral care not only enhances patient compliance but also supports proactive health management. Technological innovations have significantly advanced the field of oral hygiene, offering patients new ways to monitor and improve their practices. These tools—smart toothbrushes, mobile applications, tele-dentistry, and AI—create opportunities for personalized care, continuous engagement, and enhanced patient compliance. As these technologies continue to evolve, their impact on oral hygiene management is expected to grow, providing both patients and healthcare professionals with more effective strategies for maintaining oral health.

Tailored Oral Hygiene Plans for Diverse Patient Populations

Creating tailored oral hygiene plans for diverse patient populations is critical for improving adherence and achieving better oral health outcomes. Oral hygiene needs can vary significantly based on factors such as age, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and existing health conditions. Customizing oral hygiene recommendations to address these individual differences can greatly

enhance patient compliance, as well as the effectiveness of the intervention.

One of the most important aspects of tailoring oral hygiene plans is accounting for age-specific needs. For example, children may require more guidance and engaging methods to maintain consistent brushing and flossing habits. Interactive tools such as educational videos or gamified mobile applications have proven successful in promoting oral hygiene in younger patients (12). For older adults, who may experience reduced dexterity or other health issues that impact their ability to maintain oral hygiene, simpler tools like electric toothbrushes or floss holders can be recommended. These adaptations make it easier for older patients to follow through with daily oral care, ensuring they maintain their oral health despite physical limitations.

Socioeconomic factors also play a key role in the design of tailored oral hygiene plans. Patients from lower-income backgrounds may have limited access to dental care products or services, and they may benefit from recommendations that focus on cost-effective solutions (13). Dental professionals can guide these patients toward affordable yet effective oral hygiene products, such as over-the-counter fluoride rinses or low-cost toothbrushes and toothpaste. Additionally, educating patients on the importance of consistent care, even with limited resources, can help bridge the gap between economic constraints and optimal oral hygiene.

Cultural and language differences further complicate the design of effective oral hygiene plans. Some populations may have specific beliefs about oral care, or they may lack understanding of modern oral hygiene practices due to language barriers. In such cases, it is essential for dental professionals to provide culturally sensitive education, possibly in the patient's native language, and to be aware of cultural practices that might influence their adherence to oral care recommendations (14). Incorporating culturally appropriate examples and using interpreters or bilingual materials can improve understanding and compliance among diverse patient groups.

Finally, patients with existing health conditions, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, require specialized oral hygiene plans that account for their medical conditions. Since poor oral hygiene can exacerbate these conditions, it is important for dental professionals to work closely with patients and their healthcare teams to develop comprehensive oral care strategies that align with their overall health management. Personalized oral hygiene plans for patients with chronic conditions often include more frequent dental visits and stricter at-home care regimens to prevent complications.

Conclusion

Improving patient compliance with oral hygiene regimens requires a multifaceted approach, combining behavioral interventions, technological innovations, and tailored care plans. By addressing individual needs based on age, socioeconomic status, and cultural factors, dental professionals can promote better oral health outcomes. Continued integration of technology and personalized strategies will further support patient adherence, leading to more effective long-term oral hygiene practices. Empowering patients through education and accessible tools remains key to achieving sustainable oral health improvements.

Disclosures

Author Contributions

The author has reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable

Consent for publications

Not applicable

Data Availability

All data is provided within the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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