Knowledge About Food Insecurity Among Dental Practitioners: Preliminary Findings from the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network

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Introduction

• The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) model includes the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.  
• 4.2 million people in the United States in 2022 were impacted by food insecurity.  
• Certain nutrients can also affect oral health, such as vitamin D deficiency leading to enamel hypoplasia and chronic periodontal disease, and vitamin C deficiency causing scurvy.

Methods

• The study was conducted in collaboration with the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN), comprised of active community dental practitioners.  
• A “Quick Poll,” survey was used to gather insights from dental practitioners on food insecurity screening and its impact on oral health.  
• The Quick Poll was sent to all U.S. members of the Network, with 332 respondents completing it.

Results

• Mixed opinions about screening for food insecurity in dental practices.  
• Acknowledged food insecurity’s substantial impact on oral health.  
• Identified dental caries as the primary oral health issue influenced by food insecurity.  
• Comfortable directing patients with food insecurity to resources.  
• Mixed interest in future food insecurity studies. This brief Quick Poll provides the first insight into professional dental practitioners’ views on food insecurity-related issues.

Conclusion

• The results provided insights into dental practitioners' understanding of food insecurity in clinical settings.  
• Addressing food insecurity in dental practices is crucial, emphasizing the need for enhanced training for dental practitioners.  
• This study's findings can guide future research on food insecurity among dental practitioners and its impact on oral health.  
• Future research, including Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) studies, can focus on interventions to enhance oral health among food-insecure patients.  
• There is significant potential for educational initiatives and research to enhance the oral health outcomes of food-insecure patients.

References