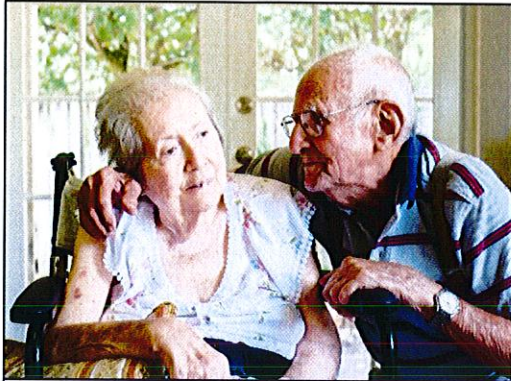


North Carolina Oral Health Section Assisted Living Facility Survey 2015-2016



The N.C. Oral Health Section conducted its first oral screenings in assisted living facilities.

The state's frail elderly were identified as a vulnerable population group encountering barriers to access dental care by both a Special Care Dentistry Advisory Group in 2010 and by a team of North Carolina's oral health stakeholders in 2014. Additionally, the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health noted several health disparities that affect vulnerable populations and that the elderly have major unmet oral health needs.

According to the North Carolina State Data Center, by 2018 the state will have more citizens ages 60 and older than the number of citizens ages 0-17. As people live longer, remain healthier longer, and retain their natural teeth longer, the demand to meet their oral health

needs will continue to rise. In 2015, the North Carolina Oral Health Section (N.C. OHS) Leadership Team agreed that expanding our surveillance system to screen this vulnerable population would not only strengthen our oral epidemiology program but also offer valuable data to create dental public health programs targeted to this population.

A statewide oral screening of the frail elderly residents of licensed assisted living facilities was conducted from August 2015 through February 2016 by the N.C. OHS. A statewide representative sample of 40 randomly selected facilities led to screening more than 850 residents. In addition to an oral screening, a facility survey form gave insight to variations among the facilities.

The main objectives of our screenings in North Carolina's Assisted Living Facilities were to:

1. Describe the oral health status of residents;
2. Describe the prevalence of various oral health services; and
3. Determine any associations between the geographical region, the quality star rating, * and treatment urgency and untreated decay among residents.

Key Findings

Objective 1 - Oral Health Status of Residents

- 29% completely edentulous
- 11% dry mouth
- 6% soft tissue lesion
- 6% tooth mobility
- 8% pain
- 38% required dental services
- 50% lack functional posterior occlusion (dentate and edentulous)

Objective 2 - Facility Survey Responses

- 38% of facility survey respondents were pleased with the dental care services offered by the facility for residents.

- None of the facilities require a dental “clearance” or dental check-up before a resident enters the facility.

Objective 3 – Associations

- Geographically, oral health status declines moving eastward from the Mountains, to the Piedmont, to the Coastal Plains.
- Facilities with lower quality star ratings have residents with poorer oral health.

This North Carolina survey found that 38% of residents screened needing care, a rate within the range seen nationally. Associations between geographic location and quality star rating can direct efforts as we target those with the most need. This statewide survey marks the first time North Carolina has investigated the oral health status of institutionalized adults along with the oral health services offered by facilities. A new *Special Care Dentistry* program is under development to address these findings. We hope to increase the oral health knowledge of facility staff through in-service training, first with the facilities participating in our survey, then, after evaluation and feedback, offering a refined training program to other sites, even nursing homes and beyond. By training the existing facility staff to promote and encourage oral health behaviors, our efforts will impact the rapid decline of oral health for residents of institutionalized adults.

* N.C. has a Star Rated Certificate program which is administered by the N.C. Division of Health Service Regulation. The program became effective in January 2009 issuing licenses, conducting annual inspections, and responding to complaints within the assisted living facilities (known as adult care homes in N.C.) participating within this survey.