

Quality of Life Differences of ECC Children versus Caries-Free Children

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Purpose: To investigate parent-reported quality of life differences in children with Early Childhood Caries (ECC) versus children who are caries-free (CF).

Methods: 105 parents of children (CF=86, ECC= 19) from hospital dental clinics in the Ohio and Washington D.C. area completed questionnaires containing 13 questions. Parents were asked to rate their child's overall oral health and whether a problem with their child's teeth or mouth caused their child to have pain or affected their child's physical, role, social, or emotional functioning.

Results: Parents of a child with ECC reported significantly poorer oral health status (mean = 1.00 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=poor and 5=excellent) compared with parents of a CF child (mean = 3.54) ($t = 9.74$, $P < 0.0001$). Significantly more ECC parents (44% versus 2%) reported that their child experienced pain in the last 3 months due to a problem with their teeth or mouth (Fisher's Exact Test, $P < 0.0001$). Compared with CF parents, ECC parents reported that their child experienced significantly more problems with physical functions such as eating hot and cold foods (26.32% of ECC parents and 1.16% of CF parents) and hard foods (21.05% of ECC parents and 1.16% of CF parents) (Fisher's Exact Test, $P < 0.005$). For questions addressing whether problems with the teeth or mouth caused the child to have trouble sleeping, have trouble saying certain words, miss school, not want to be with friends, miss activities, be teased by others, be unable to spend time with friends/family, feel angry/upset, worry about dental problems, or cry, the results were not significant.

Conclusion: Compared with children who are CF, children with ECC were more likely to experience pain and have difficulty with certain physical functions such as eating hot/cold or hard foods.

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