

Oral Care for All

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Dental hygiene is a service profession, which to me means providing efficient oral health care and giving proper information on how to maintain oral hygiene. As a dental hygiene student, I found it an eye opening experience to be able to share my knowledge with elderly people, given how often they're forgotten. I was able to share information on how to brush prosthetic dentition, overall dentition, and edentulism.

With the knowledge I have gained from seminar and clinic, I was able to provide the different techniques of tooth brushing and how effective it can be. In particular, a lady at my current job, Ms. Orybec, wore lower anterior dentures. I ended up telling Ms. Orybec that I'm currently studying dental hygiene, and that I would love to inform her on ways of effectively brushing and maintaining her dentures in good health. I remember grandma Orybec specifically telling me, "It doesn't make any sense to brush my dentures because they're fake teeth." I understand why she would think that, but I explained to Ms. Orybec that her gums still needed to be taken care of, as well as her dentures. I ended up purchasing polident and a denture brush for her, in order to provide her with some steps. With the correct information, I instructed Ms. Orybec that she should brush her gums, tongue and natural teeth with a fluoride toothpaste before reinserting her dentures, which should be left in a cup with the polident tablet dissolved in the water. She wasn't aware of the severity or the malodor it has caused her dentures, which she'd been leaving in a case for years now. As I was briefly explaining to her, I thought it would be better to also demonstrate an efficient way to brush teeth, gums and dentures.

As I demonstrated on my typodont, I noticed parents approaching me and asking me what it was that I was doing. I then explained that there are different types of tooth brushing techniques in order to ensure an efficient job. I explained how important it is to use fluoride toothpaste, since it helps prevent tooth decay by slowing the breakdown of enamel by increasing the rate of remineralization. I also recommended rinsing with salt water and gently brushing one's gums to massage them, since wearing dentures can become uncomfortable and irritable for the gums.

It's understandable that, as we get older, we sometimes get slightly lazy or we just don't have the same techniques. I therefore gave the option for Ms. Orybec, as well as the other people listening, to use the fones method for tooth brushing. I became a little nervous as I started speaking in depth about the method, so I demonstrated as I spoke on my typodont, saying slowly but surely, "It is a less complex way for children and older adults for tooth brushing. You just place the toothbrush on a set of teeth, then activate the bristles by slightly pressing against the teeth, and repeat the same strokes as you move on to the next set of teeth." Ms. Orybec and my small audience were surprised with the fact that there are actual methods with toothbrushing. I'm just pleased, knowing that I was able to make a difference with someone's oral health. I even gave my number out in order to have

some patients for next semester.

Overall, I found this to be a learning and valuable experience because I was able to step out of my comfort zone. It's also enthralling to find out that some people really don't know the importance of efficiently brushing your teeth and gums. As a dental hygiene student, I believe it is important to step out of your comfort zone and share the knowledge you have in order to make a difference with someone's oral health. As I was demonstrating and explaining, I noticed my boss wanted to engage with us, but couldn't at the moment. I decided after work to demonstrate and give her a few pointers on brushing, recommending that she use the modified bass method for toothbrushing. I briefly explained and demonstrated how it's best to use a soft bristle brush and to angle it at 45 degrees, in order to allow the bristles to insert into the interproximal areas and pockets that surround the tooth. My boss ended up telling me that she's been brushing wrong her whole life. I was amused by her comment, because we tend to just step into our dental appointments without asking any questions. I feel it's important to engage with your patient in order to build some sort of patient relationship and confidentiality. I'm pleased to know that I was able to inform her correctly and that she learned something new.

I would honestly love to have the opportunity again, to teach those who have little knowledge on what can be most effective and efficient to maintain their oral health. The truth is, some people are not that knowledgeable when it comes to brushing in order to effectively remove any debris or plaque, as well as keeping dentures in clean condition. I can gladly say that I made a small difference for a long term effect.

It is important for dental hygiene students to maintain a high level of knowledge in order to advise patients accordingly. This assignment provided me with the ability to provide those who wear dentures and those who don't with tooth brushing techniques, which aid in maintaining optimum oral health.