

## DH-Students Promoting Underage Asylum Seekers' Oral Health in Finland

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**Abstract :** Background: Oral health promotion event was organised for forty Afghanistan, Iraqi and Bangladeshi underage asylum seekers in Finland. The invitation to arrange this coaching occasion was accepted in the Degree Programme in Oral Hygiene in Metropolia. The personnel in the reception center found the need to improve oral health among the youngsters. The purpose was to strengthen the health literacy of the boys in their oral self-care and to reduce dental fears. The Finnish studies, especially the terminology of oral health was integrated to coaching with the help of interpreters. Cooperative learning was applied. Methods: Oral health was interactively discussed in four study group sessions: 1. The importance of healthy eating habits; - Good and bad diets, - Regular meals, - Acid attack o Xylitol. 2. Oral diseases – connection to general health; - Aetiology of gingivitis, periodontitis and caries, - Harmfulness of smoking 3. Tools and techniques for oral self-care; - Brushing and inter dental cleaning. 4. Sharing earlier dental care experiences; - Cultural differences, - Dental fear, - Regular check-ups. Results: During coaching deficiencies appeared in brushing and inter dental cleaning techniques. Some boys were used to wash their mouth with salt justifying it by salt's antiseptic properties. Many brushed their teeth by vertical movements. The boys took feedback positively when a demonstration with model jaws revealed the inefficiency of the technique. The advantages of fluoride tooth paste were advised. Dental care procedures were new and frightening for many boys. Finnish dental care system was clarified. The safety and indolence of the treatments and informed consent were highlighted. Video presentations and the dialog lowered substantially the threshold to visit dental clinic. The occasion gave the students means for meeting patients from different cultural and language backgrounds. The information hidden behind the oral health problems of the asylum seekers was valuable. Conclusions: Learning dental care practices used in different cultures is essential for dental professionals. The project was a good start towards multicultural oral health care. More experiences are needed before graduation. Health education themes should be held simple regardless of the target group. The heterogeneity of the group does not pose a problem. Open discussion with questions leading to the theme works well in clarifying the target group's knowledge level. Sharing own experiences strengthens the sense of equality among the participants and encourages them to express own opinions. Motivational interview method turned out to be successful. In the future coaching occasions must confirm active participation of everyone. This could be realized by dividing the participants to even smaller groups. The different languages impose challenges but they can be solved by using more interpreters. Their presence ensures that everyone understands the issues properly although the use of plain and sign languages are helpful. In further development, it would be crucial to arrange a rehearsal occasion to the same participants in two/three months' time. This would strengthen the adaption of self-care practices and give the youngsters opportunity to pose more open questions. The students would gain valuable feedback regarding the effectiveness of their work.

**Keywords :** cooperative learning, interactive methods, motivational interviewing, oral health promotion, underage asylum seekers

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