Diabetes as a risk factor for tooth loss in the geriatric population

Abstract: OBJECTIVE: A comparative study of the level and type of tooth loss, and the use of dental prostheses, was performed on one diabetic sample and another non-diabetic one, taken from elderly people receiving health care at the San Pablo Health Centre, Sevilla, in order to assess the repercussion of diabetes on tooth loss. DESIGN: A descriptive and observational study of a crossover type. SETTING: Primary care. San Pablo Health Centre, Sevilla. PATIENTS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS: Patients aged > 65 requesting health care for any reason at our PC clinic during March-April 1995. MEASUREMENTS AND MAIN RESULTS: 98 patients, 42 diabetics and 56 non-diabetics, were studied. The percentage of toothlessness was significantly greater in diabetic patients than in non-diabetic ones. None of the patients had kept all their teeth. 52.4% of the diabetic patients wore complete prostheses, percentage which went down to 25% in non-diabetics. 57.1% of diabetics and 44.6% of non-diabetics wore some type of prosthesis. CONCLUSIONS: We can consider diabetes as a risk factor in tooth loss among the elderly. Applying buco-dental hygiene measures from the diagnosis of diabetes, along with regular dental check-ups, might significantly lessen diabetics' dental loss over their lives. Opening the elderly person's mouth, whether he/she is diabetic or not, and evaluating oral mucus and dental structure, should be a investigative procedure in primary care.

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