



Healthcare providers and the oral health of the mother and the unborn child

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Luigi Paglia
Editor In Chief
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editorial

One of the main information channels on oral health during pregnancy is direct and regular contact with obstetricians and gynecologists, who are the health professionals that future mothers consult most often during pregnancy. Thus, it would be desirable to promote information campaigns on dental topics aimed at women, starting with pre- and post-partum courses, to prepare them for the changes of the perinatal period.

In recent years, health professionals have increasingly focused on maternal health during pregnancy. In a survey conducted in the United States just over ten years ago on a large sample of obstetrician–gynecologists, most respondents recognised the importance of pregnancy care. However, 77% of respondents had not advised the patients to undergo dental checkups, and 73% seldom asked the patients whether they had seen a dentist in the past 12 months [Morgan, 2009].

In light of these discouraging findings, in 2012 the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Dental Academy devised appropriate guidelines [OHRC, 2012]: It would be desirable to promote similar initiatives globally, and we ask our readers to report to us the current status in their own country.

Regarding Italy, the recent partnership between the European Federation of Periodontology and the Italian Society of Periodontology has made it possible to offer a wealth of useful information, accessible online, aimed at professionals and expectant mothers as an aid to achieve optimal oral health in pregnancy [EFP and SIdP, 2017].

Thanks to the compliance and the positive attitude of future mothers, as a result of the support of healthcare professionals and widespread dissemination, it is now possible to reduce the incidence of both pregnancy-related and childhood diseases. We are well aware that the paediatric dentist is often consulted too late, in the presence, for instance, of advanced carious lesions. Therefore it is crucial for general and paediatric dentists to inform future mothers on the critical issues that may arise during pregnancy and the first years of their child's life, and to provide them a set of instructions, starting with basic notions such as the recommended frequency of brushing and the correct use of fluorinated toothpastes.

Finally, it would be useful to promote programmes that are aimed at evaluating the patients' knowledge about aspects such as prevention and oral health. This would aid in identifying any weaknesses in the current prevention strategies, and help health professionals implement targeted projects supported by both the private sector and the national health system in order to include all the information required to achieve true primary prevention.

References

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