Background

A local pregnancy center consists of thirty students and growing; ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-six. The center provides many resources to the individuals that attend, including pregnancy, childbirth and newborn parenting along with mom and baby care classes. Oral health during pregnancy is essential because of the oral systemic link having an effect on the whole body. Dental caries is the most common chronic childhood disease among children. Children in a low socioeconomic status have a higher risk for dental caries. Oral health conditions, such as periodontal disease during pregnancy pose a risk for low birth weight and preterm babies. This program complies with the following Healthy People 2020 Objectives: OH-1.1: Reduce the portion of children ages 3 to 5 with dental caries experience. People 2020 Objectives: OH-3.1: Reduce low birth weight and preterm babies.

Objectives

Program Description

Objective 1: To help make nutritional food choices to lower caries risk for the individuals of this program, pictures of various food items were used with the amount of sugar content labeled on the back. A healthy and a decayed tooth made from poster board paper were each used, healthy foods placed on the healthy tooth and food that can increase risk of decay, placed on the decayed tooth. Each food item was evaluated by the pregnant mother/parents to guess the amount of sugar in each item, rated by low, medium and high. Sugar placed in a baby bottle was used to represent the sugar content in strawberry milk and sugar placed in a sippy cup to represent the sugar content for apple juice was used for visual aids. These were used to show how much sugar is consumed when drinking either strawberry milk or apple juice.

Objective 2: To demonstrate and evaluate effective brushing and flossing for adult and infant/child oral health a large typodont with a corresponding toothbrush was used. A demonstration and explanation on proper brushing and flossing were held at the beginning of class, throughout the remaining class, individual were evaluated on their learning. Evaluation was based on:

- Angle bristles toward gum line at a 45 degree angle
- Begin in on corner of the mouth
- Brushing facial surfaces
- Brush in a circular motion
- Brush lingual surfaces
- Angle the toothbrush vertically to reach the lingual of the maxillary and mandibular lingual surfaces
- Brush the chewing (occlusal) surfaces with a back and forth motion
- Gently clean tongue- back to front
- Brush for at least 2 minutes.

Objective 3: There is a relationship between periodontal disease and adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as low birth weight and preterm babies. In the United States, 8.1% of babies have low birth weight and 12.0% of babies are born preterm. Having attended 6 oral health educational sessions, the individuals have increased their knowledge on oral health and ways to reduce dental disease. Each participant received a bag with pamphlets on the oral/systemic link and child oral health information to keep as references.

RESULTS

Objective 1: Nutritional Food Choices
- Five Food Choices Listed
- Four Food Choices Listed

Objective 2: Effective Tooth Brushing
- 9/10 Steps Completed Correctly
- 10/10 Steps Completed Correctly

Objective 3: Number of Educational Sessions Attended

Impact

- The impact on the community has helped the participants increase their knowledge on oral health. The outcomes of the identified program objectives indicated that the pregnant women and mothers are able to make nutritional food choices. It has also improved their oral hygiene habits on brushing and flossing. The program plan has also impacted the staff member by increasing their knowledge on oral health when questions arise in their classes.

As a result of this program the participants have:
- Increased healthier nutritional food choices for both themselves and their children.
- Demonstrated effective brushing and flossing for themselves and their children.
- Learned the relationship between oral and systemic health by attending oral health educational classes.

CONCLUSIONS

- The program was successful by increasing the oral health knowledge at the pregnancy center. By attending oral health educational sessions, the participants were able to improve nutritional food choices to lower caries risk factors and demonstrate effective brushing and flossing for all ages. The outcomes for the program plan can help reduce the oral health objective in Healthy People 2020, in reducing caries risk in children ages 3-5 years.
- By increasing the effectiveness of brushing and flossing throughout the program can increase the Mother, Infant and Child Health Objective to reduce low birth weight and total preterm births.
- Further research could enhance the partnership with medical professionals, such as obstetricians, to link the relationship of oral systemic health.