

Facilitators and barriers to oral health for children with cardiac conditions

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Chief Investigator A:	Prof David Manton	Completion Date:	September 2017
Chief Investigator B:	A/Prof Michael Cheung	Status:	Pending Ethics Approval
Chief Investigator C:	A/Prof Nicky Kilpatrick		
Chief Investigator D:	A/Prof Kerrod Hallett		
Associate Investigator:	Dr Kelly Oliver		
Research Collaborator:	Dr Supriya Raj		
Support:	MCRI Heart Research Group		

Introduction

Children with congenital heart disease are reported to have poor oral health outcomes, with high rates of untreated carious lesions. A recent audit of children with cardiac conditions attending the Royal Children's Hospital Dentistry Department found that the mean age of presentation to the Dentistry Department was five years, with almost half presenting with untreated carious lesions. The high rate of untreated carious lesions suggests difficulty accessing adequate dental care, and raises questions about whether these children attend dental clinics in a private or public setting, and what the barriers and facilitators are to accessing care.

Aims

- Explore the knowledge of, attitudes about and experiences with oral health care for parents.
- Investigate the knowledge, practices and experiences of oral health professionals in the provision of oral health care for children with cardiac conditions.
- Investigate what approaches would help facilitate the future provision of care for children with cardiac conditions from a parent, oral health professional and organisational perspective.
- Develop tools and resources for parents and oral health professionals to improve access to oral health care for children with cardiac conditions.

Rationale

This study seeks to identify the barriers and facilitators to good oral health in children with congenital cardiac disease.

Methodology

This will be a qualitative research project that will explore the aims and objectives through mixed qualitative methods including:

- Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with parents who have a child with congenital heart disease; and
- Structured surveys of dental professionals followed by semi-structured interviews of key informants identified through the survey and community health service clinics.

What are the expected outcomes?

It is anticipated that the results from the study will be used to develop tools and resources for parents and oral health professionals to improve access to oral health care for children with cardiac conditions.

