

Say Ahhh: what do GPs, dentists and community pharmacists do about bad breath?

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Introduction

Halitosis or bad breath is a common problem with many causes, both intraoral and systemic. The 'Say Ahhh' study is a collaborative project between eviDent and the Victorian Research Network (VicReN) that will look at the management of this common yet potentially complex condition by GPs, dentists and community pharmacists.

Aims

To improve the primary care management of patients with halitosis.

Rationale

Research is needed to explore the need for inter-professional collaboration in the detection, screening and management of halitosis. In particular, the collaboration amongst primary care providers like GPs, dentists and community pharmacists will be investigated. This is important, as there is evidence that patients with halitosis are more likely to present to pharmacists and GPs when compared to dentists. There is a perception is that pharmacists and GPs are more accessible than dentists and, importantly, halitosis is commonly regarded as trivial due to the common perception that the condition is caused only by poor oral hygiene.

Methodology

Using a mixed methods approach, the project will be conducted in three phases:

- Phase 1 Explore the experiences of GPs, dentists and community pharmacists in managing patients with halitosis and investigate potential collaboration pathways using online surveys and semi-structured in-depth interviews
- Phase 2 Investigate patients' perspectives on managing bad breath using semi-structured in-depth interviews
- Phase 3 Develop and pilot an inter-professional collaboration model based on findings from the previous two phases to assess feasibility and acceptability

What are the expected outcomes?

It is anticipated this project will:

- improve collaboration between GPs, dentists and community pharmacists
- develop collaboration and referral pathways between three health professions to better care for patients with halitosis.