

On Oral Health-Related Quality of Life in Swedish young adults

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ABSTRACT

Young adults in Sweden have grown up with dental care free of charge until the age of twenty. Their self-perceived oral health has been reported as being good, but rapid changes in society have led to a weaker economic situation for many young adults, which may influence their dental attendance and priorities concerning oral health and oral health care. The overall aim of this thesis was to explore the views of young adults on dental care, oral health and oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL).

The thesis is based on four scientific papers which all apply a qualitative approach. In Paper I, the views of young adults on dental care were explored. Paper II investigated the views of young adults on their oral health and OHRQoL. In Paper III, measures of OHRQoL were described and analysed from a public health perspective, and in Paper IV, the views of young adults on the relevance of three measures of OHRQoL were explored. In Paper I, II, and IV, data collection was performed through qualitative interviews. The selection of informants was strategic with reference to age (21-29 years), sex and education. For Paper III, a literature search for OHRQoL measures was made in the PubMed database. The data in Paper I was analysed in accordance with the constant comparative method (inspired by Grounded Theory), and in Papers II, III and IV, qualitative content analysis was used.

The results showed that young adults were satisfied with the dental care that they had received but reported specific views and demands on dental care (Paper I). They perceived their oral health as good, but an array of oral health problems was described (Paper II). The young adults' perceived control of their OHRQoL depended on their future prospects of oral health, in relation to their perceptions of their past and present oral health. In Paper III, the search for measures of OHRQoL in the PubMed database generated 22 measures. The measures were analysed with regard to their theoretical framework and in relation to four principles of health promotion. Some elements of public health principles were found in all the measures, but most of them originated in disease-oriented theories. The occurrence of oral problems was reflected in young adults' views on the measures of OHRQoL (Paper IV). The analysed measures were deemed to have both advantages and disadvantages but to be fairly equal.

The conclusions are that young adults' OHRQoL was dependent on their earlier experiences of dental care and their former and present oral health, as well as their future prospects regarding oral health. Elements of public health principles were present to a varying degree in all the measures of OHRQoL. Young adults regarded the frequently used measures of OHRQoL as being equal. The measures were mainly disease-oriented and no specific measures had been developed for young adults.

Key words: measures, oral health, quality of life, young adults

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- I. Johansson, G., Fridlund, B. (1996) Young adults' views on dental care – a qualitative analysis. *Scand J Caring Sci* 10:197-204.
- II. Johansson, G., Östberg, AL. Oral health related quality of life in Swedish young adults. *Submitted December, 2014.*
- III. Johansson, G., Söderfeldt, B., Wärnberg Gerdin, E., Halling, A., Axtelius, B., Östberg, A-L. (2008) Measuring oral health from a public health perspective. *Swed Dent J* 32:125-137.
- IV. Johansson, G., Söderfeldt, B., Östberg, AL. Young adults' views on the relevance of three measures for oral health-related quality of life. *Int J Dent Hyg.* 2014 Nov 14. doi: 10.1111/idh.12107.



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