

Recommendation 10

Nurses use appropriate techniques when providing oral care to clients.

Level IV



Discussion of Evidence

Assessment of the mouth prior to the provision of oral care is essential; the use of direct light (such as that provided by a flashlight) to assess the oral cavity allows for greater visualization. Numerous tooth-brushing techniques exist with no one method being clearly superior to another (Assadoorian, 2006). Brushing the teeth systematically and thoroughly, using a technique that is suitable for the individual client, is important.

Appropriate care for dentures is needed as they too accumulate plaque and harbor harmful bacteria that can cause disease (Sumi, Nakamora & Michiwaki, 2002)

Appropriate technique includes behaviour management strategies for specific client populations, such as those with cognitive impairment, which will help to support the successful implementation and sustainability of optimal oral health among those with special needs (Pearson & Chalmers, 2004). For comprehensive resources related to caring for clients with delirium, depression or dementia, refer to the RNAO guidelines *Screening for Delirium, Dementia and Depression in Older Adults* (2003) and *Caregiving Strategies for Older Adults with Delirium, Dementia and Depression* (2004).

Using an ergonomic approach in terms of client and nurse positioning during the provision of oral care is an important consideration for effectiveness of the care provided and the safety of the client and nurse. Proper positioning of the client in bed or chair can prevent injury to the client (example, prevention of aspiration) and the nurse (muscle strain).

The educational resource *Oral Care for Residents with Dementia (DVD)* provides an overview of approaches for providing oral care to those with dementia, emphasizing safe and effective ergonomics. Refer to Appendix L for additional information and resources.

Examples of Technique and Body Positioning in the Provision of Oral Care:



Client in bed:
"two toothbrush" technique



Client standing:
"hand-over-hand" technique

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