

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ORAL HEALTH AMONG PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN IASSY, ROMANIA

Ioan DANILA, Lucia BARLEAN, Iulia SAVEANU, Livia MIHAILOVICI,
Cristina COSTOREL

"Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi, Romania
Faculty of Dental Medicine, Discipline of Preventive Dentistry

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ORAL HEALTH AMONG PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN IASSY, ROMANIA (**Abstract**): The **objectives** of our study were: (1) assessing knowledge level and attitudes towards oral health among children's mothers and teachers; (2) analyzing oral health care habits of mothers in relation to socio-economic status (SES); (3) evaluation of the impact of an educational program for parents and teachers in Iassy, Romania. **Material and methods.** The authors initiated in 2004 a two-year longitudinal, questionnaire-based study which included 375 mothers of 9-11 years old school children and 103 school teachers from 18 schools in Iassy. The subjects' knowledge level and attitudes towards oral health were reevaluated in 2006. Data were analyzed using the Statistica program, ANOVA, Scheffe, Pearson, Chi -square, and Gamma tests ($p < 0,05$). **Results.** The level of knowledge and attitudes towards the factors incriminated in dental decay development was significantly higher in teachers compared to mothers. The educational program resulted in an increased number of mothers' positive answers referring to the role of sugar consumption in the dental decay (from 50,2%, in 2004 to 59,7%, in 2006), the role of fluoride and tooth brushing in preventing dental decay (from 58,2% to 64,2% and, respectively, from 90,8% to 95,7%) ($p < 0,05$). **Conclusions.** The findings of this study revealed a positive relationship between mothers' SES and the level of knowledge and attitudes towards oral health. The impact of the oral health education program was positive and resulted in improved oral health care knowledge and attitudes of mothers and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of our study were: (1) assessing knowledge level and attitudes towards oral health among children's mothers and teachers; (2) analyzing oral health care habits of mothers in relation to socio-economic status (SES); (3) evaluation of the impact of an educational program for parents and teachers in Iasi, Romania.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The authors initiated in 2004 a two-year longitudinal, questionnaire-based study which included 375 mothers of 9-11 years old school children and 103 school teachers from 18 schools in Iasi. The subjects received two types of self-administered questionnaires (validated by Petersen P.E., 1992), regarding oral health knowledge and attitudes. Mothers and teachers were then subjected to an oral health educational program using a variety of educational tools and methods (interactive lessons on selected topics, demonstrations, printed educational materials, videos and slides and media campaigns). The subjects' knowledge level and attitudes towards oral health were reevaluated in 2006. Data were analyzed using the Statistica program, ANOVA, Scheffe, Pearson, Chi -square, Kendall tau and Gamma tests ($p < 0,05$).

RESULTS

The response rates in mothers' group were 92% and 86%, respectively, and in teachers' group there were 92% and 90%, respectively, for the year 2004 and 2006. ($p < 0,05$). Depending on SES and educational level, there were found significant differences ($p < 0,05$) in mothers' group regarding the frequency of dental brushing in children. The lower SES group encouraged seldom tooth brushing for their children in 2004 but recommended a daily brushing after the initiation of the program focused on dental health education. The level of knowledge and attitudes towards the factors incriminated in dental decay development was significantly higher in teachers compared to mothers. The educational program resulted in an increased number of mothers' positive answers referring to the role of sugar consumption in the dental decay (from 50,2% , in 2004 to 59,7%, in 2006) (fig. 1, 2), the role of fluoride and tooth brushing in preventing dental decay (from 58,2% to 64,2% and, respectively, from 90,8% to 95,7%) ($p < 0,05$) (fig. 3).

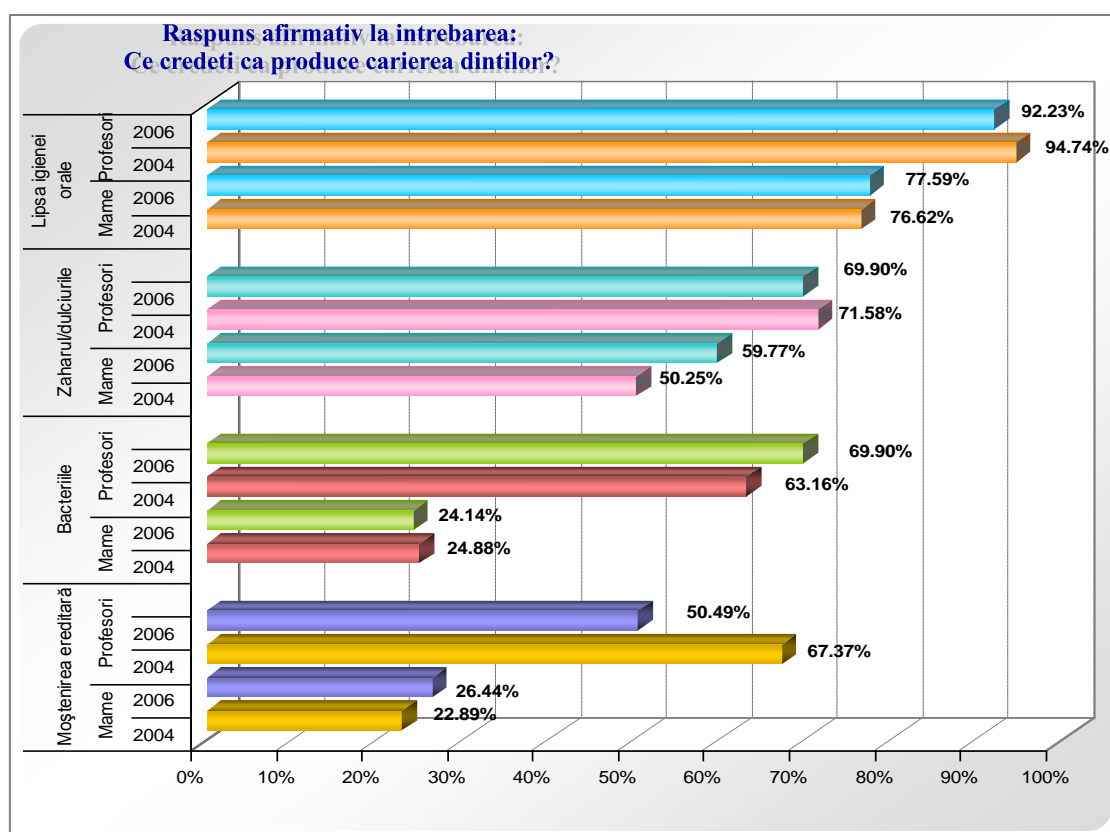


Figure 1. Mothers and teachers opinions about tooth decay etiology

Initial data from 1993 showed that 39% mothers and 26% teachers thought sugar produces tooth decay (Danila, Hanganu, 2003). After 10 years, in 2003, there is a big improvement: 30% increase of positive answers. In 2004, 50% mothers and 71,5% teachers recognized sugar impact and in 2006 we found a 10% increase for the mothers group. Teachers had a tendency of improving nutrition hygiene informations. Sugar incrimination in tooth decay etiology is considered by the teachers group gradually, from 1993 until 2006 (Danila, Petersen, 2003). In 2003, both mothers and teachers (60 % each) believed that bacteria are responsible for tooth decay and in 2006, 70% of teachers gave positive answers regarding

this aspect.

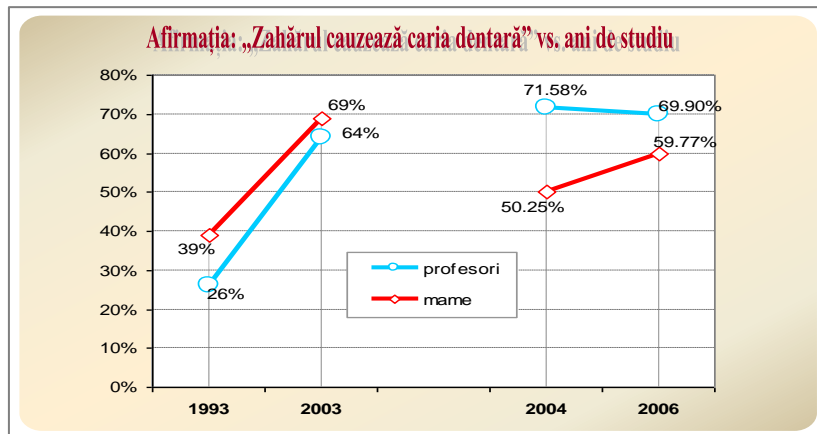


Figure 2. Mothers and teachers opinions about sugar incrimination in tooth decay

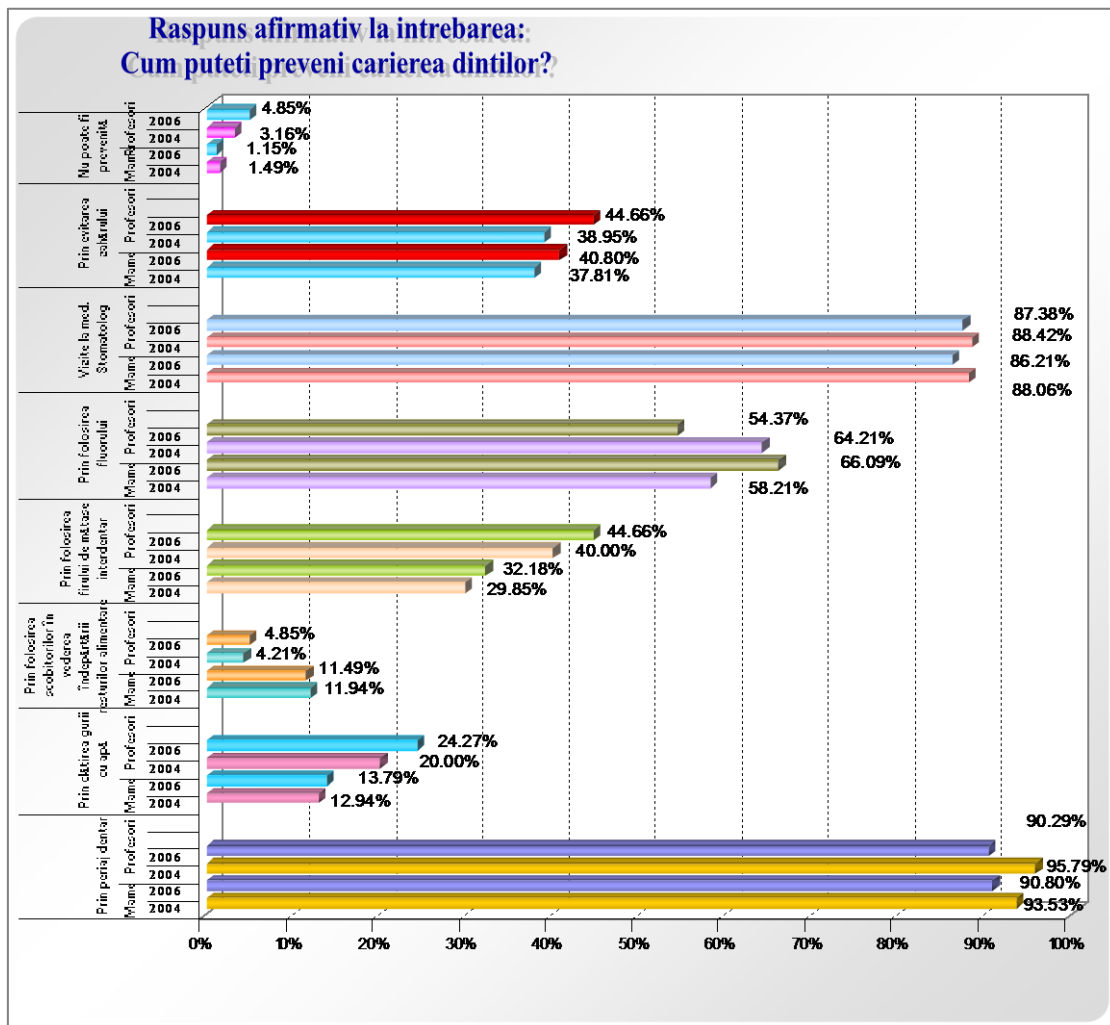


Figure 3. Mothers and teachers opinions about tooth decay prevention

Comparing mothers and teachers answers regarding tooth brushing importance with children opinions, there is a great difference between the knowledge level and the practical habits Tooth brushing impact is considered of major importance in promoting oral health (figure 4).

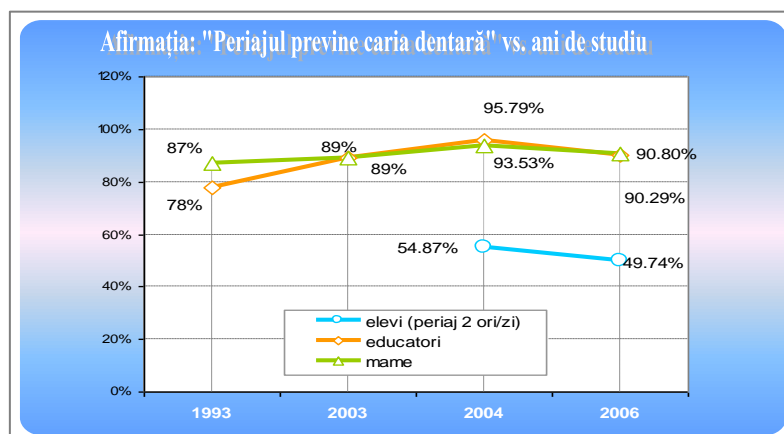


Figure 4. Mothers and teachers opinions about the role of tooth brushing

DISCUSSIONS

Oral hygiene lessons and practical demonstrations are more useful for knowledge improvement, attitudes and behavior changes in oral health, the major goal being the increase of quality of life. Meetings the dentist in schools are very important for all categories and social levels, being an important source of informations and knowledge regarding oral health (Green, 1988). Three years of oral health education programme had a big impact on behaviors and attitudes of children and teachers for a healthier life style.

The more parents are informed about oral hygiene, the less mean tooth decay index is, so information and education are important factors for oral health improvement (Davies, 2005). In order to maintain oral health in early ages, primary dentistry care is very important, because tooth decay initiation and extent are the main predictors for decays in the permanent dentition. In order to have a successful educational program, it is mandatory to start by educate parents and teachers, the ones who build opinions (Petersen, 1995).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The findings of this study revealed a positive relationship between mothers' SES and the level of knowledge and attitudes towards oral health.
2. The impact of the oral health education program was positive and resulted in improved oral health care knowledge and attitudes of mothers and teachers.

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