Oral Health Assessment in North Carolina

Rebecca King, DDS, MPH


May 1, 2007
Situation 1994

Division dental screenings since mid-70s:

• Tongue blade and flashlight
• 270,000 school children
• Case-finding only
• Not calibrated
Background and Significance

- History of surveys
- Science for planning
- Survey shortcomings
- Demands for county specific data
Universe v Sentinel Sample?

- Dual purpose
  - Screening
  - Surveillance
- State and local collaboration
  - Use existing resources
Surveillance

• “...ongoing systematic collection (assessment), analysis and interpretation of health data essential to planning, implementation and evaluation of public health practice closely integrated with timely dissemination of these data to those who need to know.”

(Declich S, Carter AO, 1994)
Screening

- ...process which searches a large population for cases with as simple a test as will reveal helpful results.

Both

- Simple
- Applicable to masses
- Acceptable
- Reproducible
- Valid
“Enhanced Screening” Aims

- Performed by Public Health RDH
- Provide info on caries
- Provide county or school specific data
- Track changes over time
- Rank disease levels and treatment needs
- Provide data for county program use
- Negative/passive consent
Participants

• State and locally employed public health dental hygienists and dentists

• Clinical folks have more trouble with conservative criteria

• Those who provide data for database
  - Training
  - Annual calibration
Data Collection

- **Prevalence:**
  - Whole mouth scores
    - K: primary -- fmt, dt
    - 5: permanent -- FMT, DT, sealants
- **Referrals for care**
Pilot Test

- September 1995 and March 1996
- System developed and piloted:
  - Reliable
  - Valid
  - Practical
  - Useful for program planning, evaluation and accountability
Oral Health Assessment

Statewide Implementation

Fall 1996
Requirements

All participants must

- Participate in a training session once
- Calibrate annually
Kindergarten Children
Caries-free

- North Carolina
- Tarheel County
Kindergarten Children
Untreated Caries

Percentage of children

North Carolina
Tarheel County

Year
Fifth Grade Children
Sealant Presence

Percentage of Children

Year


North Carolina
Tar Heel County
Challenges

• Sealants
  – Clear - Can’t see on a wet tooth
  – Opaque - is it
    • Composites (disease)
    • Sealants (no disease – prevention)
    • Can’t see at all
  – Potential impact on disease levels

• Clinical folks tend to over report

• Standardizing large group
Surveillance to Obtain Funding

- Smart Smiles/Into the Mouths of Babes
- Smart Start funding
- Referrals to safety net clinics - increase revenue
Advantages

- County/school specific data annually
- Track changes over time
- Follow % caries-free and in need of care
- Complement epidemiologic survey
- Provide data for Year 2010 Healthy People and Healthy Carolinians Oral Health Objectives
Further Information

NC Oral Health Section web site:
www.oralhealth.ncdhhs.gov

Rebecca S. King, DDS, MPH
Section Chief
919-707-5487
Rebecca.King@ncmail.net