



Results of the WDA member Perinatal Oral Health Survey

Dana Fischer, HSMB project manager dfischer@chw.org

Healthy Smiles for Mom and Baby (HSMB) is a four-year grant funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration as part of the Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement project. Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, along with a multidisciplinary Project Advisory Board, is guiding program development, implementation and evaluation.

The overarching goal for HSMB is to increase dental utilization for pregnant women and infants by integrating quality oral health care into the health care delivery system statewide.

A major component of the HSMB project is education and training of medical and dental providers on current evidence-based guidelines for providing oral health care to pregnant women and infants. To better understand needs of active workforce members, HSMB partnered with the Wisconsin Dental Association to survey its member dentists on current practice, knowledge and interest in continuing education related to oral health care during pregnancy. Opinions were gathered on barriers pregnant women face and strategies WDA member dentists felt could increase utilization among this target population. Marquette University School of Dentistry assistant professor and Master of Public Health candidate Dr. Matina Angelopoulou developed the survey and analyzed the results as part of her practicum experience working with the HSMB

project. Responses to the Perinatal Oral Health Survey were gathered via email from Aug. 22 to Sept. 9, 2016. In total, 127 member dentists responded to the survey of which 87 percent were general dentists.

Currently, 91 percent of responding dentists provide dental care to pregnant women, of which:

- 90 percent provide preventive and simple restorative treatments
- 50 percent take X-rays and perform endodontic treatments or extractions (if needed)
- 44 percent require medical consent before treatment

As for current knowledge and awareness of practice guidelines for providing oral health care to pregnant women:

- 68 percent were not aware of the Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: A National Consensus Statement

- 39 percent felt they had limited training on treating pregnant women during dental school education

Barriers identified by dentists regarding pregnant women accessing dental care include:

- Patient misconceptions of safety and importance of dental treatment during pregnancy
- Lack of routine dental treatment before becoming pregnant

- Financial barriers

- Lack of consistent oral health messages given by medical providers

Strategies identified by dentists to increase utilization:

- Oral health education and training for medical providers

- Continuing education on national guidelines for dental providers

- Integration of oral health assessments and anticipatory guidance into prenatal appointments

- Strengthening referrals between medical and dental providers

- Mass media education campaign targeting pregnant women and families

Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey. The results were shared at the October HSMB Project Advisory Board meeting and are being used to inform HSMB training and education activities for 2017.

As indicated in the survey, the top delivery method for continuing education was in-person training with an emphasis on interprofessional opportunities to collaborate with medical providers on this topic. If you are interested in participating as a trainer/peer educator in a CE session on oral health for pregnant women, please contact Dana Fischer, HSMB project manager at dfischer@chw.org.