OMICS Group Conferences
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International Conference on
Dental & Oral Health

August 19-21, 2013 Embassy Suites Las Vegas, USA

The efficacy of an oral health educational program on knowledge in caregivers of head start children ages two to five

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Abstract

Oral health care is the primary preventive method of tooth decay (caries or cavities) and infection in children below the age of five. The gap in the literature as it relates to caregiver knowledge towards oral health for their children and the effects that preventive oral health can contribute to a healthy lifestyle are deficient. This descriptive quasi-experimental study utilized a pre-test post-test method, with a convenience sample of 400 Head Start (HS) caregivers from seven program sites in South Florida. Research questions addressed the relationship between the oral health educational program and prior related behavior, personal factors, behavior-specific cognitions and affect, knowledge, and intent. There was an overall significant effect on caregivers' prior related behaviors, $r = .43$, p (two-tailed) $< .01$; behavior-specific cognitions and affect, $r = .43$, p (two-tailed) $< .01$; intention to provide oral health care for their children, $r = .27$, p (two-tailed) $< .01$; and post-test for knowledge of oral health care ($M = 60.57$, $SE = .30$) compared to pre-test for knowledge ($M = 59.03$, $SE = .26$), $t(399) = -6.35$, $p < .01$, $r = .30$). However, there was no significant relationship between the predictor variables personal factors and behavior-specific cognitions and affect, $F(2, 397) = .80$, $p = .49$. Educational programs positively impact caregivers to increase knowledge and intent to perform preventive oral health behaviors in this underserved population and the opportunity to affect governmental policy supporting oral health care services for children, as indicated by Healthy People 2020.

Biography

Dr. Miller received her Ph.D. in Nursing from Barry University, her Master's in Nursing Education from Nova Southeastern University, and her Bachelors in Nursing from Florida International University. She worked 14 years for Jackson Health Systems, specializing and certified in Pediatric nursing for medical-surgical; Head Start quality assurance nursing; and Pediatric Liver and Gastrointestinal Transplant nursing coordination with the Miami Transplant Institute. Dr. Miller's program of research is in the field of Oral Health and Preventive Health Care for underprivileged, underserved children. She developed an Oral Health Educational Program, researching post-knowledge in Head Start families.