

School Nurses and Health Visitors Perceptions of Oral Health Promotion: A Qualitative Study

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Objectives: The study aimed to explore the views of health professionals with regard to their role in oral health promotion and their understanding of the issues surrounding the delivery of effective oral health promotion within their daily practice.

Method: A focus group was conducted with school nurses ($n=6$) and health visitors ($n=3$) who had recently completed the 'Evidence Based Public Health' core module as part of their higher degree Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) programme of study (May 2014). A 12-item focus group interview schedule was devised in which face and content validity were established. A thematic analysis was then undertaken in which themes and sub-themes were identified.

Results: Three over-arching themes were identified: the 'responsibility' the participants felt they had towards their clients, the responsibility the parents should have towards their children's oral health and the responsibility of the state and its policies; the main 'barriers' encountered in the participants' practice; and the need for a 'cohesive approach' in promoting the communication of key messages on oral health.

Conclusions: Although school nurses and health visitors are best placed to take the lead on oral health promotion in children and young people, several barriers were identified, which prevented them from performing this role effectively and confidently. The participants' belief that the consequences of poor oral health is incentive enough for behaviour change may well have been a main contributory factor to their perceived ineffectiveness and frustration. A recommendation is made for more training, which focused on behaviour change principles of concordance and setting realistic targets tailored to the needs of those children and young people who need it most.

Biography:

Dr. Anne Marie Coll is a senior lecturer at the University of South Wales in United Kingdom. She completed her PhD in 2001. She has published many articles in reputed journals.