



## Dental health among adults using unscheduled care services in England

During 2009/10 and 2010/11 a survey of the dental health of adults using unscheduled care dental services was undertaken by 10 primary care trusts (PCTs) across England. The survey comprised a simple clinical examination and a questionnaire which were carried out at a variety of premises where unscheduled and out of hours treatment was provided. This summary compares the headline findings with those of the national Adult Dental Health Survey (ADHS) 2009.

Three hundred and eleven patients agreed to take part in the survey – 299 (96%) had a full examination, four (1%) had a partial examination. Three hundred and two (97%) completed the questionnaire entirely and six (2%) withdrew consent or decided not to continue so only partially completed the questionnaire.

**Table 1** Age distribution of volunteers

| Age band          | Unscheduled care volunteers | ADHS volunteers  |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 18 – 24           | 21%                         | 9%               |
| 25 – 34           | 29%                         | 14%              |
| 35 – 44           | 21%                         | 18%              |
| 45 – 54           | 16%                         | 18%              |
| 55 – 64           | 8%                          | 17%              |
| 65 or over        | 5%                          | 24%              |
| No reply recorded | 3 volunteers                | -                |
| Total             | 311 volunteers              | 9,663 volunteers |

### The presence of any natural teeth

In the 2009 ADHS 94% of adults in England were dentate (having some natural teeth) and 6% were edentate (having no natural teeth). All the volunteers in the survey of unscheduled

care (100%) were dentate. The average number of natural teeth was 26, which was similar to the findings of the 2009 ADHS (table 2).

**Table 2** Average number of teeth by age band

| Age band   | Unscheduled care volunteers | ADHS volunteers |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 18 – 24    | 29                          | 29              |
| 25 – 34    | 28                          | 29              |
| 35 – 44    | 26                          | 28              |
| 45 – 54    | 24                          | 26              |
| 55 – 64    | 20                          | 23              |
| 65 or over | 18                          | 19              |
| Total      | 26                          | 25              |

## Pain

Overall, 9% of dentate adults in England reported having a problem or pain in their mouth at the time of examination, compared with 90% of the unscheduled care volunteers. In England, 70% of dentate adults reported never or hardly ever feeling dental pain in the last 12 months and 8% reported feeling dental pain fairly or very often. Among the unscheduled care volunteers 40% reported never or hardly ever feeling dental pain in the last 12 months and 27% reported feeling dental pain fairly or very often.

PUFA – which relates to open pulp, ulceration, fistula and abscess – is a recently developed index of clinical consequences of untreated dental caries (tooth decay). It provides a measure of extensive dental caries which is causing significant problems in need of early attention.

Overall in England 7% of dentate adults had at least one PUFA symptom. Among the unscheduled care volunteers this was greater, 33% had at least one PUFA symptom.

## Oral hygiene

In the ADHS 75% of dentate adults said that they cleaned their teeth at least twice a day, 22% said that they did this once a day, 2% less than once a day and 1% said they never cleaned their teeth. Among the unscheduled care volunteers 64% reported that they brushed twice or more a day, 30% said they brushed once a day, 6% less than once a day and less than 1% said they never cleaned their teeth.

## Presence of dental calculus (tartar)

In the ADHS, of 5,570 examined dentate adults 69% had one or more sextants with calculus, with an average of 1.8 sextants affected. In the survey of unscheduled care users, of 303 examined adults with calculus data collected, 79% had one or more sextants with calculus, with an average of 0.4 sextants affected.

## Reported treatment

In England in the ADHS, 90% of dentate adults reported having a check-up during their last course of treatment; 50% had their teeth scaled and polished; 47% received advice on looking after their teeth; 34% had an X-ray; and 28% had their teeth filled during their last course of treatment.

Among the unscheduled care volunteers 76% of adults reported having a check-up during their last course of treatment; 24% had their teeth scaled and polished; 2% received advice on looking after their teeth; 32% had an X-ray and 33% had their teeth filled during their last course of treatment.

## Oral Health Impact Profile (OHIP)

Of dentate adults in England 30% experienced physical pain occasionally or more often in the previous 12 months, 20% experienced psychological discomfort and 39% of dentate adults reported experiencing at least one problem concerning their oral health.

Almost twice as many unscheduled care volunteers (59%) reported experiencing physical pain occasionally or more often in the previous 12 months, 34% experienced psychological discomfort and 74% reported experiencing at least one problem concerning their oral health.

## Oral Impact on Daily Performance (OIDP)

Overall in the ADHS, 33% of dentate adults reported having at least one oral health problem that caused difficulty with eating, speaking, relaxing, being sociable or doing normal jobs in the past 12 months. In the survey of unscheduled care adults this figure was much higher with 90% reporting having at least one oral health problem that caused difficulties.

## Summary

The age profile of the adults in contact with unscheduled care differed from that of the ADHS such that younger age groups were far more strongly represented. Among the older volunteers they had fewer natural teeth, on average, than their same-age peers in the ADHS.

As would be expected far more unscheduled care volunteers reported having pain at the time of the examination than did the ADHS volunteers. It is of note that 10% of unscheduled care users reported having no pain yet they were attending a service provided to treat pain.

Fewer of the unscheduled care users reported brushing twice daily compared with ADHS volunteers and very few reported receiving advice on self-care in their last course of treatment.

Far more of the unscheduled care users had one or more PUFA signs and reported having psychological discomfort related to a problem with their oral health.

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