

Using participatory research to explore the oral health awareness of junior and senior high students at L.Y. Cairns School

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Abstract

Vulnerable populations, such as school-aged adolescents with mild cognitive disabilities, can be partners in the creation of interactive learning tools. This participatory qualitative study involved teachers and school-aged adolescents in the creation of artwork that answered 4 questions: 1) What does a healthy mouth look like? 2) What does an unhealthy mouth look like? 3) What foods keep your teeth healthy?, and 4) What are some healthy teeth habits? Three teachers and their 33 students provided artwork that depicted their answers to the 4 questions, and written descriptions. The researchers coded the artwork individually and grouped the data into 4 major categories: Healthy vs. unhealthy (yellow teeth, pain); Lifestyle (no smoking, visiting the dentist), healthy habits (brushing, flossing); and Foods and Nutrition (fruits and vegetables - to eat, soda pops and pizza - to avoid). A four-minute-long video featuring animations of the students' artwork was created professionally to showcase their knowledge and facilitate an interactive learning tool. Co-learning between researchers and participants fostered positive, collaborative learning within the community. Significance. This study provided insights into an effective strategy for creating oral health education tools for the learners, by the learners. The video presentation will be used by dental hygiene students to engage vulnerable populations in a discussion about oral health.

Key words

Community-Based participatory research, oral health, oral hygiene, adolescent, art, vulnerable population.

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