Assessment of Oral Health-related Quality of Life in Periodontal Treatment: A Pilot Study

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Abstract: Clinical practice and research focusing on quality of life have become increasingly important in healthcare. Traditionally, in the treatment of periodontal diseases, much emphasis has been placed on patients’ biomedical data, but little effort has been made to assess their quality of life. In order to provide patient-centered and comprehensive periodontal care, it is essential to understand the psycho-social behavioral aspects of each patient. The present study aimed to assess the perceived quality of life of patients with periodontitis, utilizing an instrument based on the dental hygiene model of oral health-related quality of life (OHRQL), and to discuss its significance.

Thirty-one patients with clinical diagnoses of chronic periodontitis (average age: 54.1 years, 10 males and 21 females) were assessed for their perceptions of oral health by using a Japanese version of an instrument developed based on the OHRQL, before commencement of initial periodontal therapy. Opinions of dentists and dental hygienists regarding the introduction of the OHRQL assessment were also sought by a survey questionnaire.

The total mean OHRQL score of the periodontal patients was statistically significantly higher than that of healthy volunteers, indicating that the patients’ perceived quality of life was compromised. A comparison of mean scores for OHRQL domains revealed that domains such as “pain”, “eating and chewing”, and “psychological function” were especially compromised. Multiple regression analysis revealed that the OHRQL score was significantly associated with percentage of sites with probing depth ≥ 4 mm. As for “health perception”, approximately 60% of respondents rated their oral health as “bad” when compared to others in the same age group. Through the process of OHRQL assessment, the dentists and dental hygienists felt that introduction of OHRQL is beneficial in clinical practice and education.

Within the limitations of the present study, the results suggested that periodontal patients’ perception of their quality of life can be objectively assessed by the OHRQL instrument. Planning and implementing interventions to address compromised domains of OHRQL may afford provision of periodontal care that focuses on the quality of life.

Key words: Oral health-related quality of life, Periodontitis, Dental hygiene