



Relationship between diet and oral health in Irish nursing homes: An examination into staff and patient's perceptions

Authors

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Introduction

- Elderly population is defined as anyone aged 65 or over. (1)
- Ireland's population is ageing. (2)
- Malnutrition is very common amongst the elderly population. This can lead to complications e.g.; lengthier hospital stays and increased mortality rates (3)(4)
- Oral health (OH) is a contributing factor to malnutrition. (5)(6)

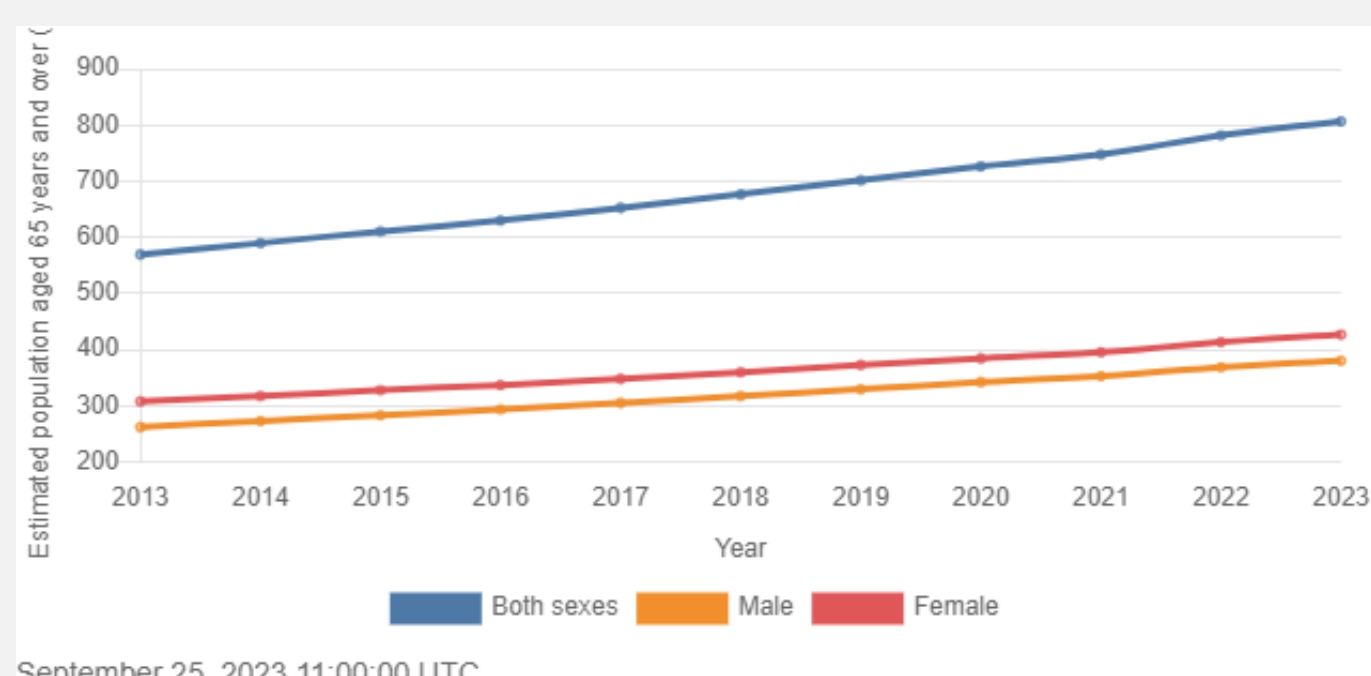


Figure 1: Estimated population aged ≥65 by sex and year (7)

Methods and Materials

- A cross-sectional study design was used in this study.
- The two populations examined within Irish nursing homes were nursing home (NH) residents and NH staff (n=60 participants).

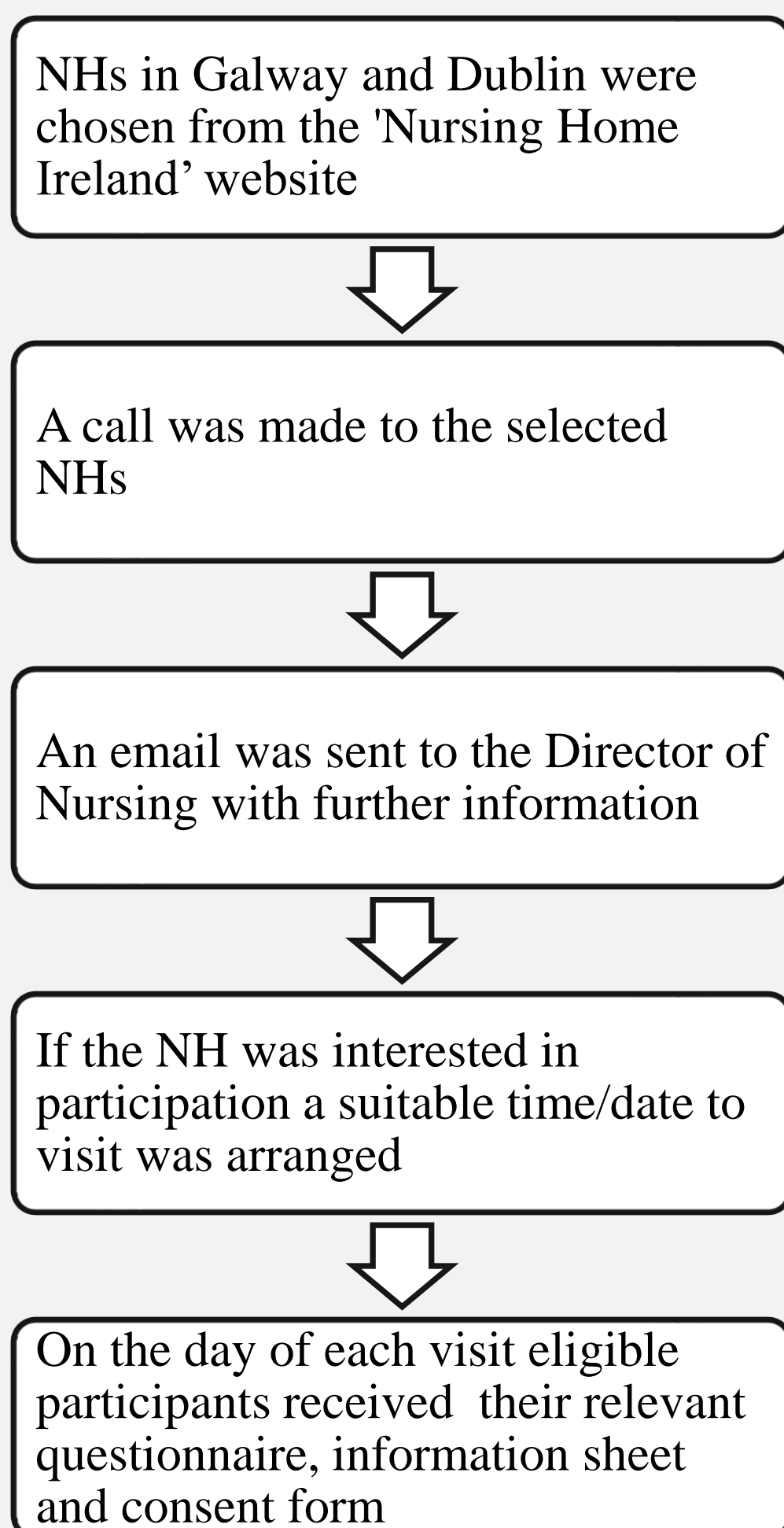


Figure 2: Data collection process

Resident questionnaire:

Section A – background and demographic information.

Section B – modified version of validated OHIP questionnaire. (8)

Staff questionnaire:

Exploration of overall OH knowledge and activities to maintain good OH in their residents.

Results

Residents

- The study found a significant correlation between diet satisfaction and resident's number of teeth ($p = 0.013$). Residents with fewer teeth reported a decrease in diet satisfaction.
- Although no statistical difference was found between diet satisfaction and denture presence ($p = 0.160$) there are trends to show that their presence may improve diet satisfaction.

Staff

- Almost half of the NH staff participants stated that they had received no training regarding OH/hygiene for their residents.
- Only 3 out of the 27 staff participants rated their OH knowledge as 'Excellent'.

Table 1: Staff's perceived knowledge on the relationship between diet and OH alongside the corresponding percentages

| Knowledge on relationship between diet and OH | Percentage of staff |
|---|---------------------|
| Excellent | 11.1% |
| Very good | 44.4% |
| Good | 44.4% |
| Poor | 0% |
| Very poor | 0% |

Conclusions

Residents

- There are similar findings in existing literature regarding tooth quantity and diet satisfaction. (9)(10)

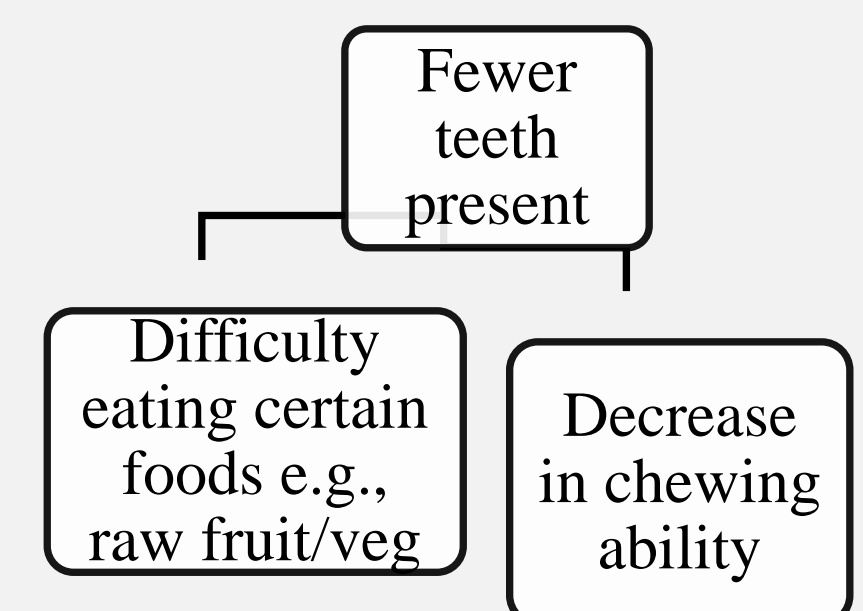


Figure 3: Flow chart of how having fewer teeth can possibly negatively impact nutritional status/diet

- Denture presence has been noted in previous literature to improve diet satisfaction. (11)(12)

Important: ill-fitting dentures may cause issues.

Staff

- Overall, there appears to be very little existing literature surrounding nursing home staff and oral health.
- There is conflicting evidence regarding OH training in NH staff members. (13)(14)(15)
- It has been noted that lack of OH knowledge can be seen as a barrier to providing sufficient oral care to NH residents. One study noted that OH knowledge in healthcare staff is 'deficient' and 'lacking'. (13)



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