

DENTAL CARIES IN CHILDREN

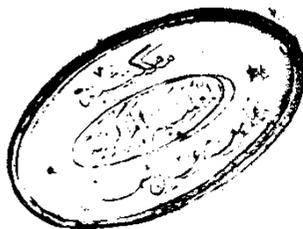
ESSAY

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BY

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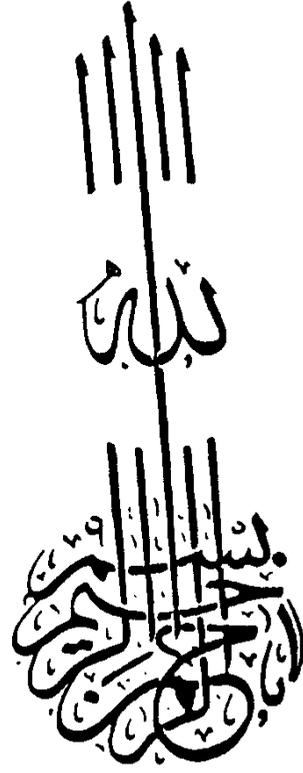
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1984



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TO

MY FATHER

&

SOUL OF MY MOTHER

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INTRODUCTION
AND AIM OF THE WORK

INTRODUCTION

Dental caries is the most common disease of man kind, affects people of all ages and is the commonest health problem affecting children. It has reached epidemic proportions in modern times, as a result of the dietetic trends towards fine consistency and high content of refined sugars. The prevalence of caries in developed countries is greater than 99.9 % and has been increasing in developing countries with the increase of popularity of highly refined sugars.

The development of dental caries requires :-

- a) Presence of cariogenic bacteria, which are rapid acid producing, lowering the pH below the critical value required for desolving enamel.
 - b) Presence of sugar in the diet, which can be degraded by bacteria into acidic compounds; a process which can be interfered with by
 - c) The presence of an effective immune response
- (Roitte & Lehner, 1980).

The physical , emotional discomfort, inconvenience can be significant in this problem . The primary care physician providing health care for children can prevent the consequences of caries. This article will discuss the preventive role of the physician by appropriate assessment, education and referral to dentist after presenting review of the etiology, morbidity, pathology, immunology , genetic aspects and preventive measures for the most common pediatric dental problem seen by the primary care physician.

AIM OF THE WORK

Is to analyse the problems that this wide spread disease creates for the individual and for the society as a whole, to explain briefly modern concepts of the cause and mechanisms of dental caries in man, and of how attempts can be made to reduce the ravages of the disease, by preventive measures.

DEFINITION

Definition

Caries - from the Latin, decay, simply means decay or rotting of the teeth, it is a form of progressive destruction of enamel, dentine and cementum, initiated by microbial activity utilizing sugar in diet for production of acid at the tooth surface (Silverstone 1978 and Roitt and Lehner, 1980).

THE ORAL CAVITY AND TOOTH STRUCTURE

The Oral Cavity

The significance of the oral cavity lies in its evaluation as part of the diagnostic survey. The primary care physician should be cognizant of the common disorders related to structures of the oral cavity , the relationship of oral conditions to the total health of the child, and the oral cavity as a reflection of the dynamic nature of growth and development in the pediatric patient.

Anatomically, it is the space bounded by the lips and cheeks anteriorly and laterally, by the palate above, and by the muscular floor below; The alveolar processes and the teeth divide the region into the oral vestibule and the oral cavity proper. The oral vestibule is the space between the lips and cheeks, and the teeth and dental arches. The oral cavity proper lies inside the alveolar processes and the teeth. All too often there is a tendency to have one's attention focused upon the teeth, with a subsequent neglect in the observation of

the soft tissues of the mouth and pharynx. Therefore, a sequence of inspection would place the teeth "last, not first", including a survey and assessment of the following entities :

- The breath : the odor from the mouth, if unusual, can be an indication of an existing disorder. Halitosis may be related to local or systemic infections poor oral hygiene, or upper respiratory difficulties such as tonsillitis, sinusitis or mouth breathing. Of these, poor oral hygiene is the most common and potentially may require dental care.

- The saliva : Copious salivation in young children is not uncommon and is usually stimulated by the oral examination. Excessive salivation, while it can occur normally, may indicate the presence of oral infection such as caries, gingival stomatitis, or salivary gland disorders. Absence of saliva may be a sign of severe dehydration, or a specific disorder such as congenital ectodermal dysplasia.