

## Oral Health Survey of New Hampshire Older Adults, 2012

### Background

Within the next 20 years, the number of adults 65 years old and older will grow to about 350,000 or 21% of New Hampshire's population.<sup>1</sup> Oral diseases are highly prevalent among older adults and have a negative impact on their overall health.<sup>2,3</sup> Since New Hampshire-specific data on the oral health status of this population are lacking, during the spring and summer 2012 the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services, Oral Health Program conducted the first screening to assess the oral health status of New Hampshire's older adults.

### Methods

The Oral Health Program selected a convenience sample of older adults attending six senior centers and congregate meal sites in New Hampshire. Six dental hygienists, experienced in the use of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors *Basic Screening Survey (BSS) for Children*, were trained to use the *BSS for Older Adults* to uniformly assess older adult oral health status. During a brief visual screening, hygienists assessed the presence of tooth decay, untreated decay, gingivitis, root fragments, suspicious soft tissue lesions, denture use, and need for dental treatment among the participating older adults. Survey participants were also asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire about their own dental care.

### Results

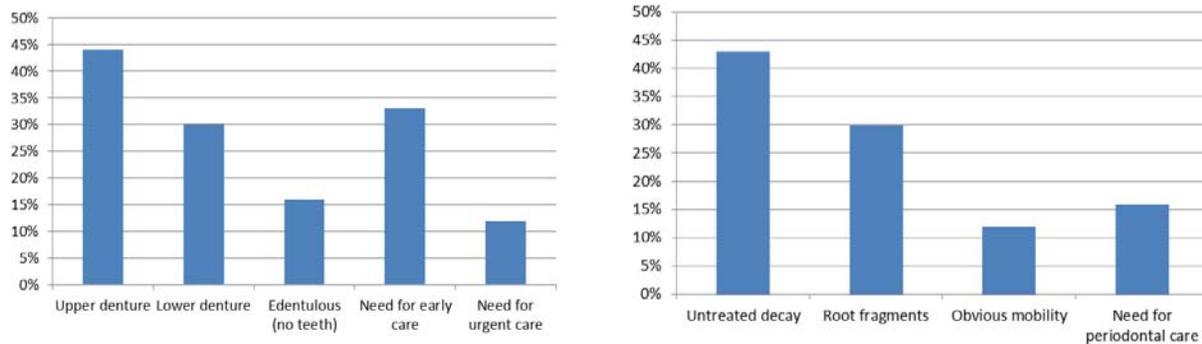
Six geographically distributed New Hampshire senior centers and congregate meal sites participated in the oral health assessments. The number of participants per center ranged from 19-24, with the total of 129 older adults screened. The age of the participants ranged between 51 and 94 years, with the average age of 73 years. Eighty-four (66%) of 127 participants were females (data on gender were missing for two participants), and 125 (97%) reported their race as white. The following table describes prevalence estimates and only reports estimates with five or more individuals in each category.

N = 129	N (%)
Having removable upper denture	57 (44%) with 53 (91%) of those wearing denture for eating
Having removable lower denture	38 (30%) with 32 (84%) of those wearing denture for eating
No functional contact	42 (33%)
Edentulous (no teeth) adults	21 (16%)
Dry mouth	7 (5%)
Suspicious lesions	Numbers are too low to report
Need for early dental care	43 (33%)
Need for urgent dental care	16 (12%)
Following indicators were assessed only among those who are NOT edentulous N= 108	
Substantial oral debris	13 (12%)
Gingivitis	9 (8%)
Untreated decay	46 (43%)
Root fragments	32 (30%)
Obvious mobility	13 (12%)
Need for periodontal care	17 (16%)

In addition to the screening, participants answered written survey questions related to current use of tobacco, having any insurance that pays for routine dental care, having a particular dentist or a dental clinic for usual dental care, and having an oral cancer screening in the past five years. The responses “I do not know” were included in the estimates. Results are described in the table below.

N = 129	N (%)
Tobacco use (everyday/someday)	11 (9%)
Having some type of dental insurance	12 (9%)
Having a particular dentist/dental clinic	55 (43%)
Having an oral cancer screening	26 (20%)

### Selected oral health indicators among assessed older adults



### Conclusions

The Oral Health Program assessed a convenience sample of New Hampshire’s older adults attending six senior centers and congregate meal sites. Through this project, we gained valuable experience working with the older adult population and now have better insight into the prevalence of dental disease among this segment of New Hampshire residents.

### References:

- 1) US Census Bureau, available from: <http://www.census.gov/>, accessed on 04/22/2008
- 2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance for dental caries, dental sealants, tooth retention, edentulism, and enamel fluorosis - United States, 1988–1994 and 1999–2002. In: Surveillance Summaries, August 26, 2005. MMWR 2005:54(No. SS-3).
- 3) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National
- 4) Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. Basic Screening Survey, available from <http://www.astdd.org/basic-screening-survey-tool/>, accessed on 10/18/2012.