



Infant Dental Enucleation in Sweden

Perspectives on a Practice among Residents of Eastern African Origin

av

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Abstract

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Infant dental enucleation (IDE) is a practice consisting of the removal of deciduous canine tooth buds in infants. Practiced mainly in Eastern Africa, the purpose is to treat or to prevent bodily symptoms and diseases. IDE can cause both general and oral complications. The occurrence of IDE among Eastern African immigrants in a few European countries has been reported. However, knowledge surrounding the practice in Sweden was poor. The overall aim of this work was to explore IDE in the Swedish context. Four studies were conducted. Paper I presents a review of scientific publications. An overview of IDE was gained, and some knowledge gaps were identified. Paper II describes a cross-sectional study to determine the prevalence of IDE in small children. Dental records of 1133 children (mean age 4.6 years, SD 1.4) from a multi-ethnic area were studied. Missing deciduous canines without any registered reason were documented. One or more deciduous canines were missing in 21% of the children with known Eastern African origin (n=101), compared to only three children in the rest of the population (n=1032). Six adults of Somali origin were interviewed to explore their experiences and perceptions of IDE (paper III). These experiences and perceptions were categorised in four essentially different ways: an effective and necessary treatment, a disputed tradition, an option to failure and a desperate measure. Their experiences and perceptions were found to be highly influenced by contexts. In the final study (paper IV), the knowledge, experiences and attitudes among dental and health care personnel were examined. Questionnaires were sent to licensed personnel working in emergency departments, midwifery and child health centres, school health services and public dental health services in ten municipalities. Less than 20% had any knowledge of IDE, while 12.5% of the respondents encountering children had seen at least one patient subjected to IDE. Different attitudes were reported between clinical settings regarding responsibilities and possibilities concerning the management and prevention of IDE. From the findings presented in this thesis, it was concluded that there is a need for initiatives to increase awareness of and knowledge on IDE among dental and health care professionals. Legally obligated responsibilities in these professions regarding IDE need to be clarified, and initiatives should include guidelines regarding both the management of IDE and its prevention in Sweden. Educational programmes should also be produced for residents of Eastern African origin to change their perceptions of IDE, and a culturally sensitive approach should be adopted to ensure that such programmes are effective.

Keywords: Infant, Africa, Traditional Medicine, Cuspid, Postoperative Complications, Child Advocacy, Emigrants and Immigrants, Sweden

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