Self-assessed oral health of elderly using complete dentures

Mauro Dal Zot Dutra\textsuperscript{1}
Paula Benetti\textsuperscript{2}
João Paulo De Carli\textsuperscript{3}
Juliana Cama Ramaciatto\textsuperscript{4}


RESUMO

\textbf{Introdução}: com o aumento da longevidade da população e a potencial relação entre a idade e perda de dentes, existe uma necessidade crescente da substituição de dentes por próteses totais. O impacto das próteses totais na saúde bucal de idosos é de grande importância para sua saúde geral. \textbf{Objetivo}: o objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a auto-percepção sobre saúde bucal de usuários de próteses totais. \textbf{Métodos}: o instrumento utilizado foi o questionário GOHAI (Índice de Avaliação Geriátrica de Saúde Oral), contendo 11 questões específicas sobre aspectos físicos e psicológicos (conforto ao comer, dor, dificuldades em morder, mastigar ou engolir alimentos, dificuldade de fonação, limitação nos contatos sociais, cuidados com auto-estima e aparência). As próteses totais foram avaliadas de acordo com o índice Nevalainen, incluindo aspectos de retenção, estabilidade, dimensão...
vertical e oclusão. Sessenta voluntários frequentadores de um Departamento de Atenção aos Idosos concordaram em participar do estudo. **Resultados:** a pontuação média do GOHAI foi 25, ou seja, notou-se uma baixa auto-percepção de saúde bucal. A saúde bucal foi classificada como insatisfaatória, apesar da qualidade ou tempo de uso das próteses totais ou da idade que a pessoa tinha quando começou a utilizar as próteses totais. **Conclusão:** conclui-se que os escores GOHAI não foram afetados pela estabilidade ou retenção das próteses totais. Com o aumento na longevidade e a potencial relação entre a idade e a perda de dentes, há uma necessidade crescente de substituição dos dentes por próteses totais. O impacto das próteses totais na saúde bucal de idosos é de grande importância para sua saúde geral.

**Palavras-chave:** odontogeriatra, auto-percepção, indicadores do estado de saúde.

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** with the increase on population longevity and the potential relationship between age and teeth loss, there is a rising need for teeth replacement with complete dentures. The impact of dentures using on older adults oral health is of great importance for general health. **Aim:** the objective of this study was to evaluate self-assessed oral health of older adults using complete dentures. **Methods:** the instrument used for this evaluation was GOHAI (Geriatric Oral Health Assessment Index) questionnaire, containing 11 specific questions of physical and psychological aspects (such as eating comfort, pain, troubles in biting, chewing or swallowing foods, talking issues, limitation is social contacts, oral health care, self-esteem, appearance). Complete dentures were evaluated according to Nevalainen index, including retention, stability, vertical dimension, articulation and occlusion aspects. Sixty participants (n=60) agreed in participating on the study, from Department of Attention to Older Adults. **Results:** mean GOHAI score was 25, meaning a low self-perceived oral health. Oral heath was reported as unsatisfactory, despite the quality or time in use of complete dentures or the age the person had when start using dentures. **Conclusion:** we conclude that GOHAI scores were not affected by dentures stability and retention.

**Keywords:** geriatric dentistry, self-assessment, health status indicators.
INTRODUCTION

Longevity and aging of population is increasing. Current demographic projections for the year 2025 estimate a significant grow in elderly population: people having 60-85 years old will be double the current number and above 85 years population will be three times greater (IWASAKI et al., 2015).

In Brazil, a research showed that only 23.5% of the elderly population (from 65 to 74 years old) does not use dentures. Upper complete dentures were found in 63.1% of the population and lower dentures in 37.5% (BRAZIL, 2011). This information suggests an association between the increase of age and the need for dentures.

Many functional and physical modifications occur with aging, frequently including teeth loss and the need for dentures (CAMARGO et al., 2008). In older adults, the teeth loss can alter the entire digestive system functioning, limiting mastication, swallowing and speak.

Oral health is considered an essential component of a person global health and wellness, because is related to the appearance, life quality and nutrition status (DIAS-DA-COSTA et al., 2010). Responsible for the increase in longevity and good health in elderly population, the adequate ingestion of nutrients, generally exists in the presence of healthy teeth or well adapted and adequate dental prosthesis. Due to prosthesis deficiencies, a person can change the nutritional habits, leading to an increase of digestive issues. To overcome mastication problems, the patient choose softer food, mainly carbohydrates rich in energy and poor in vitamins or protein, which can aggravate the nutritional status of older adults (MONTENEGRO et al., 2007). Therefore, not using or having inadequate dentures can result in esthetic, functional, nutritional and digestion problems in addition to temporomandibular dysfunction.

Considering the increase of population longevity, the loss of teeth with age, and the influence of prosthesis on older adults general heath, the present study evaluated the quality of complete dentures used by older adults in Passo Fundo. This research analyzed the relation of dentures and individual self-perception and investigated how these conditions interfere in the self-assessed oral health.
MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants of the study

The project was previously approved by the Ethical Committee of São Leopoldo Mandic School of Dentistry and Research Center (#2010/0263). This paper presents data from older adults who attend 13 groups of the Department of Attention to Older Adults (DATI) of a city in the south of Brazil, recognized as reference in health care. From the 2722 participants of DATI, this study selected people following the inclusion criteria: being older than 60 years old, using complete dentures in both arcs, being physically and mentally capable. Therefore, the study was conducted on a convenience sample of sixty older adults (n=60), who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and agreed in participate.

Evaluation instrument

Oral health evaluation was assessed using the Geriatric Oral Health Assessment Index (GOHAI). Participants answered a questionnaire based on the instrument developed by Atchinson and Dolan (1990). Only 11 of the original 12 questions were included in this study, because the question about teeth sensitivity was not applicable for denture users. Questions included in the study analyze physical aspects (such as eating comfort or pain, troubles in biting, chewing or swallowing foods, talking issues) and psychological issues (for example comfort level in eating with people, limitation is social contacts, oral health care or concerns, self-esteem, appearance). A higher index score indicates better self-assessed oral health.

Complete dentures evaluation criteria

Dentures quality was evaluated following the criteria established by Nevalainen et al. (1997), based on retention, stability, occlusion, articulation, vertical dimension and time in use. These items were classified in good, fair or poor.

Statistical analyses

The relation between different factors was evaluated using Pearson correlation.
RESULTS

The greater number of participants were female (n=54) having a mean age of 69 years. Mean age of males (n=6) was 71.

GOHAI evaluation

For the population studied, mean GOHAI score was 2.45 (standard deviation of 2.23). Thirteen volunteers (21.7%) presented moderated self-assessed oral health (score between 27 and 30), and the others presented low oral health (score lower than 27) (Table 1).

Table 1 - Frequency distribution (%) of individual GOHAI items (based on Atchinson and Dolan7, 1990).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your denture limited the kind or amount of food you eat?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How often did you have trouble biting or chewing any hard or firm food, such as meat and apples?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are you able to swallow food comfortably?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do your dentures prevent you from speaking the way you wanted?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are you able of eating any kind of food without feeling discomfort?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did you avoid contact with people because of your denture condition?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Were you pleased or happy with the appearance of your gums or dentures?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did you need using medication to relieve pain or discomfort in your mouth?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nevalainen index results

From the 60 participants, 42 (70%) presented the same time of use for the maxillary and mandibular complete dentures, and regarding the time of use, 31 (51.7%) participants have dentures with up to 10 years of use.

Most part of mandibular dentures (70%) were classified as having poor stability, while maxillary dentures were mostly classified as having good (50%) or fair (41.7%) stability (Table 2). In addition, few participants (8.3%) reported low stability of both dentures, meaning that no relation was found between the stability of maxillary and mandibular dentures.

Table 2 - Percentage of mandibular and maxillary complete dentures in respect to the stability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maxillary dentures</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandibular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4 (6.7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>10 (16.7%)</td>
<td>4 (6.7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 (23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>16 (26.7%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (8.3%)</td>
<td>42 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30 (50%)</td>
<td>25 (41.7%)</td>
<td>5 (8.3%)</td>
<td>60 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that great part of maxillary dentures (93.3%) was classified as having good or fair retention, 80% of mandibular dentures were demonstrated to have poor retention (Table 3).
The greater amount of dentures presented poor articulation (70%) and occlusion (61.7%), and 58.3% of the cases presented both conditions classified as poor.

And interocclusal freeway space greater than 6 mm was observed in 80% of the participants, meaning low vertical dimension. A satisfactory vertical dimension (freeway space between 1 and 6 mm) was found for the other participants.

No correlation was found between the participants age when start using dentures and GOHAI scores ($p = 0.1080$). Besides that, 75% of obtained scores were maintained lower than 27, indicating low self-assessed oral health, independently of the age of their dentures.

**DISCUSSION**

Subjective instruments, such as GOHAI, allow the obtainment of information about oral health, not used exclusively for diagnostics, but to assess complementary information of individual or population health.

GOHAI is considered an efficient self-reported oral health assessment instrument (EL OSTA et al., 2012). Older adults presenting high need for dental care or deficient oral health were easily identified using GOHAI, specially compared to other methods, such as OHIP-14.

Results showed a low self-reported index in the population studied (47 volunteers), which is in agreement with data reported by Naa et al. (2014), Henriques (2007), Santos et al. (2007), Araújo et al. (2008) e Costa et al. (2010). Only 13 patients presented a moderated oral health self-perception. No significant association was found between GOHAI values and time of dentures use, which means that patients had low self-perception of dentures, independently of the age of prosthesis or time of dentures use. In addition, data analyses demonstrated that factors such as dentures stability, retention, occlusion, articulation and vertical dimension had no influence on GOHAI values.
However, Yea-Yin et al. (2015) found a high and moderated GOHAI in patients with mucosa alteration, prosthetic stomatitis, clinically inadequate dentures. Reisine and Bailit (1980), Lemos et al. (2013), Silva et al. (2005), Benedetti et al. (2007) and Martins et al. (2010) also demonstrated a positive self-perception in despite of oral health conditions.

The main factors associated to positive self-perception were the appearance (good) and mastication (positive). Haikal et al. (2011) reported positive GOHAI for 67% of studied cases, regardless of the bad clinical status of participants, suggesting low self-esteem and accepting limitations related to older adults oral health. Other study (SOARES et al., 2011) demonstrated a positive self-perception contrasting with the observed clinical condition.

A difference between clinical evaluation of dental prosthesis and the patients’ satisfaction level was observed. Self-assessed reports show that the patient evaluate their own oral condition based on the presence of pain, esthetics, functional and social problems, diverging significantly to the professionals evaluation (REISINE and BAILIT, 1980; LEMOS et al., 2013).

Silva et al. (2005) found no difference of GOHAI index between edentulous patients compared to patients having teeth. These authors observed differences only in physical dimension (mastication). The fact that most of the edentulous patients were using complete dentures may have an influence on the negative perception of other factors. The authors suggest that further researches should investigate the self-perception of edentulous patients, confronting the results with dentate patients. GOHAI index was considered better in those individuals with better periodontal condition and presenting natural teeth. Atchinson and Dolan (1990) affirmed “Presenting few teeth, using removable prosthesis and noticing the need for treatment were factors significant related to the low index score, characterizing the worst oral health.”

In a study of Naa et al. (2014), which included 17 volunteers, the GOHAI was used to measure the self-assessed oral health and Cantril index was used to assess the life overall satisfaction. 60 % of the participants presented low self-perception and 70% reported high (positive) life satisfaction. These data suggested that the low GOHAI had no effect on the overall quality of life.

In contrary, John et al. (2007) found a strong association between depression and dissatisfaction with dental prostheses. Depressed people are, generally, less satisfied with the dental prosthesis (JOHN et al., 2007; RODAKOWSKA et al., 2014). The authors demonstrated
an association of depression and dissatisfaction with dentures, with possible clinical consequences.

Therefore, adequate treatment is needed to overcome the low self-assessed oral condition, providing improvement of mastication quality and comfort during dentures use. In addition, it is important to highlight the relevance of prevention of oral diseases to preserve natural teeth and decrease the need of dentures use, and thus, providing greater satisfaction with the oral conditions.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that GOHAI mean value was 25, demonstrating a low self-assessed oral health (dissatisfaction) of older adult participants. Participants showed low perception of oral heath regardless the dentures quality or age and the time of dentures use. Data analyses showed that the differences found between the stability and retention of maxillar and mandibular dentures had no influence on GOHAI values.
REFERENCES


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