



C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Vol. 5 Issue 5 ■ February 9, 2009

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit

For 12 Million Uninsured Children, High Barriers to Dental Care

Oral health is an important part of good general health. Untreated tooth decay in children can lead to serious health consequences that include lifelong tooth and gum problems, hospitalizations and emergency room visits, delayed physical development, and loss of school days.

In August 2008, the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked parents with children age 3-17 years about dental care and dental health concerns for their children.

Use of Dental Care

Experts agree that dental care should begin early in life, seeing a dentist by age 3. In responding to this Poll, 57% of parents reported that their child(ren) began going to the dentist by age 3. Experts also agree that children should receive dental care on a regular basis—at least once a year, if not more. In this Poll:

- ⇒ 82% of parents say their children receive regular dental care, at least once a year
- ⇒ 18% of parents say their children do not receive regular dental care

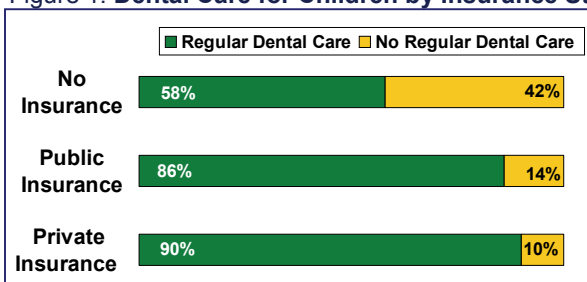
Dental Insurance

Having dental insurance helps families afford regular dental care for their children. In this Poll, parents indicated whether their children had dental coverage. We found

- ⇒ 56% with private dental insurance
- ⇒ 28% with public dental insurance
- ⇒ 16% with no dental insurance

Dental insurance is closely linked to receipt of dental care. As shown in Figure 1, children with no dental insurance were 3-4 times more likely to have no regular dental care, compared to children with either private or public dental insurance.

Figure 1. Dental Care for Children by Insurance Status



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2009

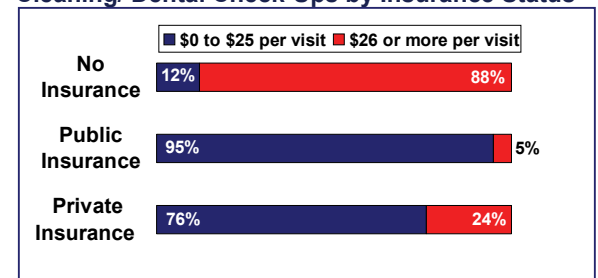
Report Highlights

- Nearly 90% of children with dental insurance receive regular dental care.
- Only 58% of children with no dental insurance receive regular dental care.
- Nearly one-quarter of parents report “costs too much” as a big problem in getting dental care for their children.

Out of Pocket Costs for Dental Care

Out-of-pocket costs for dental care can be barriers to dental care. As shown in Figure 2, the out-of-pocket cost for a routine dental check-up was reported as more than \$25 for the majority of children with no dental insurance (88%), and for nearly a quarter of children with private dental insurance (24%).

Figure 2. Out of Pocket Cost for Children's Routine Cleaning/ Dental Check-Ups by Insurance Status



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2009

Children with higher out-of-pocket costs for dental check-ups have lower rates of receiving regular dental care. Among children whose routine dental visit costs more than \$25 out of pocket, only 78% receive regular dental care. In comparison, among children whose routine dental visit costs \$25 or less, 92% receive regular dental care.

Barriers to Dental Health

Nearly one-quarter of all parents report “costs too much” as a big problem in getting dental care for their children. Other big problems with getting dental care include that children do not like going to the dentist, and about 1 in 10 parents have difficulty in finding a dentist who accepts their child’s insurance or report that it is hard to get an appointment (Table 1).

Table 1. Barriers to Dental Care

Concerns rated as a big problem
23% - Costs too much
13% - Child doesn't like going to the dentist
11% - Difficult to find a dentist who accepts a child's insurance
9% - Hard to get an appointment

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2009

Parents without dental insurance for their children report concerns as a big problem more often than parents with dental insurance for their children. For instance, two-thirds of parents whose children do not have dental insurance report “costs too much” as a big problem in getting dental care for their children.

14% of parents whose children have public dental insurance report that it is “difficult to find a dentist who accepts child's insurance” as a big problem in getting dental care for their children, compared with only 8% of parents whose children have private insurance.

Not Getting Needed Dental Care

Overall, 12% of parents have not obtained the dental care they thought their children needed. Unmet dental needs are present at almost twice this rate among children with no dental coverage, with 22% of parents indicating they have not obtained dental care that their child needed (Table 2).

Table 2. Lack of Needed Dental Care

Parents not obtaining care they thought their children needed and insurance status
9% of children on private insurance
13% of children on public insurance
22% of children without insurance

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2009

Implications

When it comes to dental care for U.S. children, the results of this Poll provide some good news. Over half of parents report their children begin dental care by age 3, and nearly 90% of children with dental insurance receive regular dental care, at least once a year.

But poll results also indicate areas of concern. Sixteen percent of children, representing 12 million children across the nation, are uninsured for dental care. These children are substantially more likely to lack regular dental care, to have unmet dental health needs, and to have cost barriers to care. In fact, two-thirds of parents in this group say cost is a big problem in getting dental care for their children.

Costs can be problematic for children with private dental insurance, as well. Nearly a quarter of this group paid more than \$25 out-of-pocket for a routine dental cleaning for their child; these higher out-of-pocket costs were linked to lower rates of regular dental care.

Dental health is essential for children’s physical well-being. This Poll is a reminder that cost and coverage remain major barriers to regular dental care.

Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc. for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered from August 1-31 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older (n=2,245) with and without children from the Knowledge Networks standing panel that closely resembles the U.S. population. For this analysis, a subset of parents with children age 3-17 years was used (n=1,608). The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 to 7 percentage points, depending on the question.

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