

Promoting oral health among women in perimenopause/menopause: A mixed methods study to inform intervention strategies.

Project team

Western Sydney University

- Ms. Namitha Thomas (Australian centre for Integration of Oral Health, School of Nursing & Midwifery)
- Prof. Kath Peters (School of Nursing & Midwifery)
- Dr. Kate O'Reilly (School of Nursing & Midwifery)
- Prof. Ajesh George (Australian Centre for Integration of Oral Health, School of Nursing & Midwifery)

University of Technology Sydney

- Dr. Mariana Souza (Faculty of Health)

Summary of the project

Menopause is a physiological process characterised by cessation of menstruation and occurs due to lack of secretion of oestrogen from the ovarian follicles. It is estimated that the global number of women in menopause is expected to reach 1.2 billion by 2030. The cessation of the menstrual cycle results in a variety of unpleasant symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, urinary disturbances, mood changes, and bone and joint pain. In addition to this, women also experience adverse oral health changes such as burning sensation of the mouth, dryness of mouth, alteration in taste, inflammation of supporting tissues of the teeth, osteoporosis of jaws, and an increase in tooth decay. These symptoms affect their overall quality of life.

The systemic aspects pertaining to menopause are well documented in the literature. However, there is currently limited evidence on the oral health knowledge, attitudes, and practices of women in perimenopause/menopause worldwide. Providing appropriate assistance during the early period of the menopausal transition could potentially reduce the prevalence of oral health problems in the perimenopausal/menopausal period and improve overall well-being in the later years. The General practitioners and practice nurses have been identified as a key healthcare providers who could play a key role in promoting oral health across other phases of women's life. However, this aspect of women's health care has also not been extensively reviewed in the literature.

The broad aim of the study is to explore the oral health knowledge, attitude, and practices of women in perimenopause/menopause and the role of healthcare providers such as General Practitioners and Practice Nurses to inform strategies for oral health promotion in Australia.

The key objectives include.

- To review current national and international literature regarding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of oral health care among women in perimenopause/menopause and their health care providers.
- To confirm the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of women in perimenopause/menopause in Australia towards oral health and to identify barriers and facilitators in this area.
- To explore the perceptions of women in perimenopause/menopause towards oral health and to gain in-depth information about their acceptability and feasibility of healthcare providers promoting oral health.
- To explore the perceptions, knowledge, and practices of healthcare providers in Australia towards oral health care among women in perimenopause/menopause and their perceived barriers and facilitators in this area.
- To incorporate study findings to inform new intervention strategies to promote the oral health of women in perimenopause/menopause.

Proposed plan: This project will be undertaken across three phases using a systematic approach.

Phase	Project type
Phase 1	Integrative Review
Phase 2	Quantitative study- Women in perimenopause/menopause
Phase 3	Qualitative study – Women in perimenopause /menopause (3A) & Healthcare providers such as General Practitioners (GP) and Practice Nurses (PN)