

## **ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION CAMP CARRIED OUT IN A LOCAL NGO IN LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH**

*By -Dr. Damini Ramchandani*

“Prevention is better than cure” and today, the dental profession has had a long-standing interest in the prevention of oral diseases. Health promotion encompasses a range of complimentary actions to promote health and well being of populations. Dental health education programmes are developed particularly for use in schools and clinical settings but there are still numerous children in India without parental care and support.

During my year of internship as a dental house surgeon at King George’s Dental University Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh I worked closely as a voluntary dentist with a local NGO. As of 2013, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state with a population of 199,581,477.

The aim of the organization is to provide rehabilitation of street and working children and to protect their rights so that they lead a life of dignity. The dental camp was undertaken thrice within 10 months in 2010-2011 for children aged 6-18 years living in two open shelters or “Gharonda” which houses 20-25 children in each shelter. The shelters are run by the NGO itself, which includes individual, corporate, social clubs and groups. The centers are located in a residential area of the city giving the children a feeling of home. Education, housing and living are all managed by the NGO.

Until then, it was the general medical health needs of the children that were focused on. This was the first dental initiative of its kind to cater directly to the oral health needs of these children.

The main objective of the dental programme was to determine the oral health status and treatment needs of children aged 6 -18 years associated with this NGO. This was achieved by performing a thorough oral clinical examination using sterilized diagnostic instruments (Plane mouth mirror, William’s probe and a No.23 dental explorer). The DMFT and Gingival indices (GI) were used to measure the caries and gingival health of the children respectively.

Emphasis was given on prevention:

- Demonstration of correct tooth brushing technique.
- Importance of daily tooth brushing habit.
- Educating children regarding the importance of healthy eating and avoiding foods that increase the risk for caries and plaque.
- Oral prophylaxis and scaling were performed.
- Distribution of free toothpastes in order to motivate the children for brushing regularly.

The children who required further diagnostic investigations like dental X-rays were referred to the paediatric dental ward at King George’s Dental hospital, Lucknow where they were treated for any teeth that needed to be restored and extracted.

Follow up was done twice with a gap of 3 months each after the first dental camp. The results proved to show a 90% use of proper brushing technique and considerable reduction in plaque.