

Incorporation of *Smiles for Life*: A National Oral Health Curriculum into a Physician Assistant Education Curriculum at Wichita State University

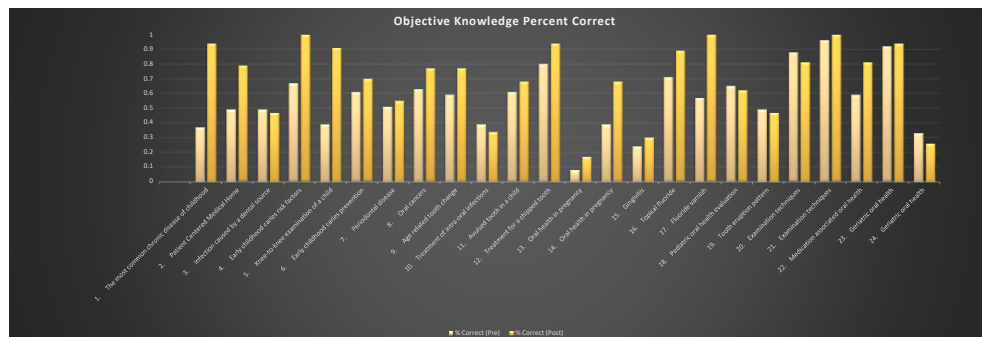
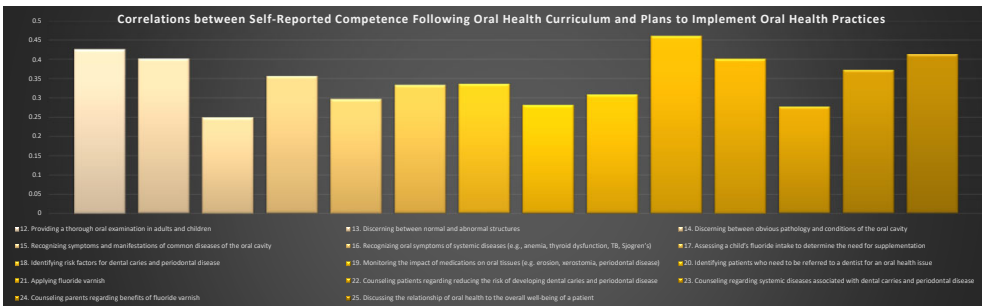
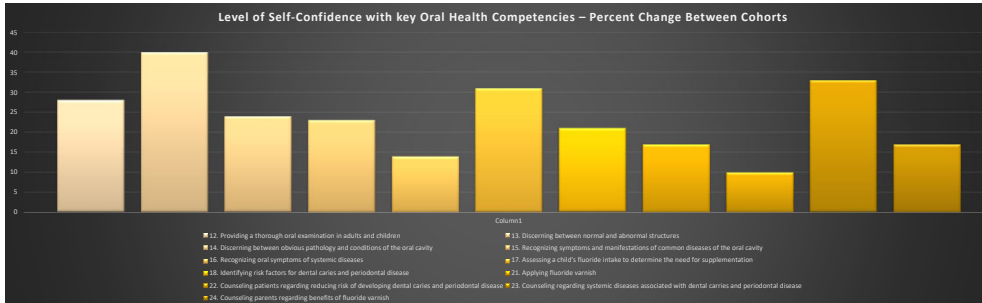
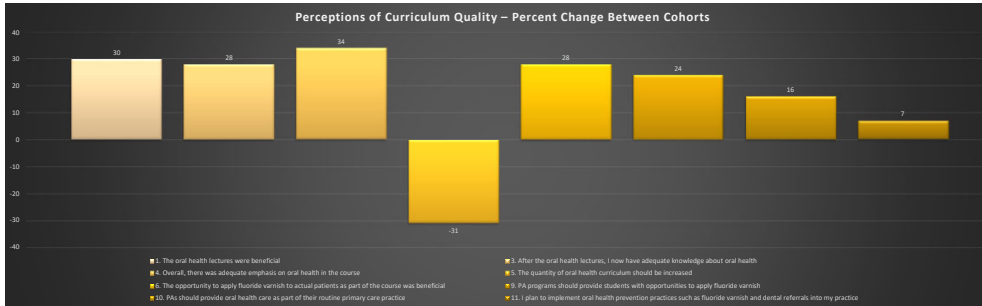
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There is a silent epidemic of oral disease in America that is not being addressed, in part due to the segregation of oral health from the rest of the medical training provided to PA students. This study looked at changes to curriculum in a PA program to address this epidemic.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the difference in effectiveness of a locally developed oral health curriculum compared to the nationally developed *Smiles for Life* curriculum enhanced with two interprofessional skills activities.

The project measured:	Perceptions of curriculum quality
	Attitudes/beliefs regarding oral health and the Physician Assistant's role in oral health
	Level of self-confidence with key oral health competencies
WSU Class of 2018	Students' oral health knowledge
	Received pre-existing oral health curriculum developed in 2010
	4 hours of didactic lecture delivered by DH and PA faculty
WSU Class of 2019	Clinical Skills workshop with AEGD residents with local anesthesia of the oropharynx
	Received enhanced curriculum including 8 modules from <i>Smiles for Life</i> with enhanced IPE workshops
	16 hours didactic lecture provided by PA faculty
WSU Class of 2019	Clinical Skills workshop with DH including application of fluoride varnish
	Received enhanced curriculum including 8 modules from <i>Smiles for Life</i> with enhanced IPE workshops
	16 hours didactic lecture provided by PA faculty



Measurements
Objective knowledge for each of the two student cohorts was evaluated using 24 multiple-choice questions from the *Smiles for Life* examinations approximately 5 months after delivery of the oral health content.

Students also completed a survey with 25 Likert scale questions pertaining to student subjective perceptions of the overall quality of the oral health curriculum (n=6), attitudes/beliefs regarding oral health and the PAs role in oral health (n=5), and their level of self-confidence with key oral health competencies (n=14).

Subjective questions dealing with the curriculum all showed statistically significant improvements following the revision. This can be directly related to the addition of the *Smiles for Life* components to the didactic material in the course as no other changes were made to the presented material.

All of the 14 questions concerning the student's self-reported oral-health related competencies showed improvements.

This directly relates to the students' willingness to implement oral health in their own clinical practices. As would be expected, the better prepared a student is or the higher their level of self-reported competence, the higher their willingness to implement into their clinical practice.

Our findings showed an improvement of 14% of possible points on objective knowledge testing, higher student evaluation of the curricula, improvement in student attitudes towards oral health and willingness to implement oral health evaluation and management within their future practices. Due to these overall positive findings, the new curricula will be continued within the WSU PA program.

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