



HIV IN THE DENTAL PRACTICE

A case driven intervention in cooperation with a professional dentists association

SENSOA

Sensoa is the Flemish Expertise Centre on Sexual Health. Integration of HIV and people living with HIV in all aspects of society is one of its objectives. Therefore Sensoa provides information and support on living with HIV to people living with HIV, their social environment and relevant professionals. Sensoa is also an official reporting point on discrimination due to HIV.

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ABSTRACT

Cases of difficulties in getting access to dental care for people living with HIV made Sensoa set up a collaboration with the Flemish Society of Dentists (VVT). The intervention providing tailored information and advice on HIV in dental practice, consisted of two factsheets (one for people with HIV and one for dentists) and a lecture. Information on HIV-infection, disclosure, confidentiality and standard precautions were the main topics in both factsheets. A lecture in 16 out of 19 dental associations in Flanders added more background to the factsheets. Collaboration and interventions were evaluated as very effective to reach the target group with tailored information, and to raise awareness on HIV in dental practice.

BACKGROUND

In 2007, Sensoa identified 3 cases of difficult access to dental care. People living with HIV disclosing their HIV-status to their dentist were refused dental care and had to contact up to five dentists before being offered proper treatment. Based on the case analyses and consultation with the involved people living with HIV and dentists, Sensoa presumed insufficient awareness and knowledge on HIV in dental practice as leading causes.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Objectives

1. Finding/surfacing determinants and issues involved in refusal or acceptance of people living with HIV into dental practice.
2. Offering tailored information to dentists and awareness raising on HIV in the dental practice.

Methods Consecutively

1. Analyses of the Sensoa cases, a brief literature study and structured interviews with five dentists and with several individuals living with HIV to list up determinants and issues.
2. Presentation to the Flemish Association of Dentists, proposing collaboration on making a tailored intervention.
3. Orientation of the interventions based on available resources, abilities and skills of Sensoa and VVT.
4. Involvement of people living with HIV, healthcare professionals specialized in HIV and dentists in developing the intervention.
5. Evaluation of the intervention and collaboration.



RESULTS

1. Fear and uncertainty were identified with dentists as well as with people living with HIV. Uncertainty in dentists was driven by insufficient knowledge of the current presentation and management of an HIV infection and the belief that dental care to people living with HIV demands a specialized environment exceeding standard precautions. People living with HIV feared rejection or non-confidentiality of their HIV status.
2. Two factsheets, one for people living with HIV and one for dentists, were developed with information and advice on HIV infection, disclosure, confidentiality and standard precautions. The content was adapted for people living with HIV.
3. These factsheets were distributed to 5000 dentists with the dentist magazine Contactpunt. Factsheets were consultable on both the websites of Sensoa and VVT. A poster presentation on the factsheet for dentists was held on the VVT yearly Dentist Conference on the 15th of May 2009 in Hasselt (1500 attendees).
4. A special article in the Sensoa magazine Positief appeared reaching 1600 readers: people living with HIV, their environment as well as professionals. The electronic newsletter of Sensoa for professionals promoted the factsheets widely.
5. 16 out of the 19 Flemish dentist associations programmed the lecture (period 2009 – 2011). Approximately 1500 dentists attended. The lecture was evaluated with a high average score of 8.6 on a scale of 10.
6. Both the involved dentists of the VVT and the collaborators of Sensoa evaluated the cooperation as a positive experience.
7. Similar advice as in the factsheets and lectures was integrated in the recent guidelines for Dentists developed by an expert dentist group (see references)
8. For Sensoa the factsheets still offer support in handling cases of HIV in dental care today.

CONCLUSIONS

The cooperation between Sensoa and VVT was very efficient: tailored information could be provided to a large group of dentists and people living with HIV. The information given in the interventions succeeded in making both dentists and people living with HIV aware of each other's needs when they meet in a dental practice.

REFERENCES

<http://www.health.belgium.be/internet2Prd/groups/public/@public/@shc/documents/ie2divers/19069789.pdf>