

«The role of the Dental Hygienist in high complexity departments: the experience of Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital»

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Key words: Hight Complexity – Mechanical Ventilation – Oral Cavity

Introduction: The removal of bacterial plaque deposits and the decontamination of the mucous membranes of the oral cavity is a fundamental procedure for hospitalized patients and in particular for patients who need mechanical ventilation. The administration of oxygen, the endotracheal aspiration, the absence of mastication involve the alteration of physiological mechanisms with consequent colonization of the oropharynx which becomes a favorable condition for the development of VAP (Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia).

Objectives: Inclusion of Dental Hygienist in the multidisciplinary team of patients with special needs. Information and training for families, care-givers and healthcare professionals. Training to correct oral hygiene techniques in patients with tube or tracheal cannula in spontaneous breathing or mechanical ventilation.

Materials and Methods: Information phase with focus groups organization, slides projection in the units of Neurorehabilitation e Multidisciplinary Pediatrics. Individual training in bed of the patient for the teaching of personalized techniques of oral hygiene and evaluation of the degree of patient collaboration. Inclusion in a appropriate care system: outpatient or in bed. Administration of satisfaction questionnaires to family members.

Results: The units in which the focus groups were carried out, all involved the figure of Dental Hygienist.. Out of 167 consultations carried out, 48 patients were taken over by the Dental Hygienist.

29 patients were included in the outpatient pathways, while 19 services were performed directly in bed with use of portable dental unit.

7 patients were on assisted mechanical ventilation. The satisfaction of family members and caregivers, expressed by satisfaction questionnaires, is 100%.

Requests for advice also came from units where no focus groups were carried out. In 5 cases the presence of Dental Hygienist was requested in joint operating session.

The 7 patients treated in mechanical ventilation are in follow-up for the assessment of VAP onset.

Conclusions: The profession of the Dental Hygienist is becoming increasingly established even in patients with special needs. The experience of Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital shows how the inclusion in the organic National Health System of such a figure leads to a qualitative improvement of the care paths.

Future developments include collaboration with other units of the Hospital such as Intensive care unit and Onco-Hematology unit.



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2019



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