Dental caries in Taranaki adolescents: a cohort study

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Summary: This paper describes dental caries status (in the permanent dentition) recorded in a cohort of 430 Taranaki adolescents examined in 2003 at age 13, 255 (59.3%) of whom were re-examined at age 16. At follow-up, caries prevalence (1+ DMFS [decayed/missing/filled]) had increased from 68% at baseline to 79%, mean DMFS had increased from 2.9 to 3.6, and the prevalence of high caries experience (5+ DMFS) had increased from 20% to 41%. The 3-year mean net caries increment of 0.5 surfaces was dominated by occlusal surfaces and the overall incidence of caries was approximately 46%. Over one-third of the cohort (37%) presented with decayed surfaces at follow-up, and this was significantly higher among Māori and males.

Comment: Oranga niho or oral health issues are a major cause for hospitalisation amongst Māori and tamariki, tai tamariki and pakeke. Te Kete Hauora at the Ministry of Health has recently launched a publication on research priorities for Māori in oral health; this useful resource can be accessed at http://www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/otago019612.pdf.

http://www.unboundmedicine.com/medline/ebm/record/21957836

Independent commentary by
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Dr Matire Harwood (Ngapuhi) has worked in Hauora Māori, primary health and rehabilitation settings as clinician and researcher since graduating from Auckland Medical School in 1994. She also holds positions on a number of boards, committees and advisory groups including the Health Research Council. Matire lives in Auckland with her whānau including partner Haunui and two young children Te Rangiura and Waimarie.

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