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Community Health / Policy

Abstract Title

Parental Uptake and Views on the Canadian Dental Care Plan in Manitoba, Canada

Authors

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Background

Among the several barriers Canadian families face for accessing oral health care for their children, affordability remains the greatest one. To address this, in 2024 the Canadian Government deployed the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP), to support the dental needs of low-income families.

Objective

This study aims to investigate uptake, awareness, and experiences of parents with the CDCP.

Methods

A survey tool was developed by the research team comprising 53 items grouped into six themes, including awareness of the former Interim Canada Dental Benefit; awareness of the CDCP; application to the CDCP; using the CDCP; challenges with the CDCP; and improvements for the CDCP. Survey data collection took place between December 2024 to July 2026, where parents of children under 18 were recruited from communities including public health clinics in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Statistics included descriptive (frequencies, means) and bivariate (chi-square) analyses.

Results

A total of 308 participants were surveyed being the majority mothers (71.1%), with a mean age of 38.8 ($\pm$ 9.1) years, unemployed (51.0%), residing in Winnipeg (80.5%), with an average of 2.8 ($\pm$ 1.5) children. Overall, 79.5% were aware about the CDCP, while the majority (32.1%) referred to have heard about it at dental offices; 48.2% participants applied to the program, while 94.5% reported to perceive the CDCP to improve access to oral health care. Parents who were married and with dental insurance for their children were significantly more aware of the program, while Canadian Indigenous parents were the significantly most unaware ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Despite high awareness, more children could be benefiting from the CDCP. Improving the reach of public policies is key to promoting equitable access to oral health for all, especially children. Investigating parents' awareness and experiences with the CDCP will inform targeted oral health promotion efforts with priority and underserved populations to increase uptake.