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Child oral health-related quality of life prior to treatment under general anaesthetic

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Background: Dental caries has significant impact on children and their families, with increasing numbers of children in the UK requiring treatment for caries under general anaesthetic (GA). Oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL) measures can be used to assess the impact of dental diseases on the lives of children, but most studies have relied on parental reports of child OHRQoL.

Aim: to assess the impact of caries before treatment under GA on the everyday lives of children and their families.

Method: the Caries Impacts and Experiences Questionnaire for Children (CARIES-QC) was used, which is a caries-specific measure of OHRQoL. Impact on overall quality of life was assessed using the 9-item Child Health Utility 9D (CHU-9D). Parents were asked to complete the Family Impact Scale (FIS).

Results: 53 parent and child dyads participated. Children were aged 5-14 years (mean 7 years). 74% of children lived in deprived areas with IMD quintiles 4 or 5. CARIES-QC scores ranged from 0-22 (out of 24), mean 6.8 (± 5.6). CHU-9D scores ranged from 9-31 (out of 45), mean 12.7 (± 4.6). FIS ranged from 0-34 (out of 40), mean 7.3 (± 8.2).

Conclusion: Dental caries has a variable impact on the OHRQoL of children, but in some cases the impact was considerable. The most common impacts were food getting stuck in teeth and having to eat on one side. The main impacts on the families of children with caries were family members being upset, feeling guilty and having to take time off work.