The effectiveness of early referral of children by well-child clinics for their first dental visit

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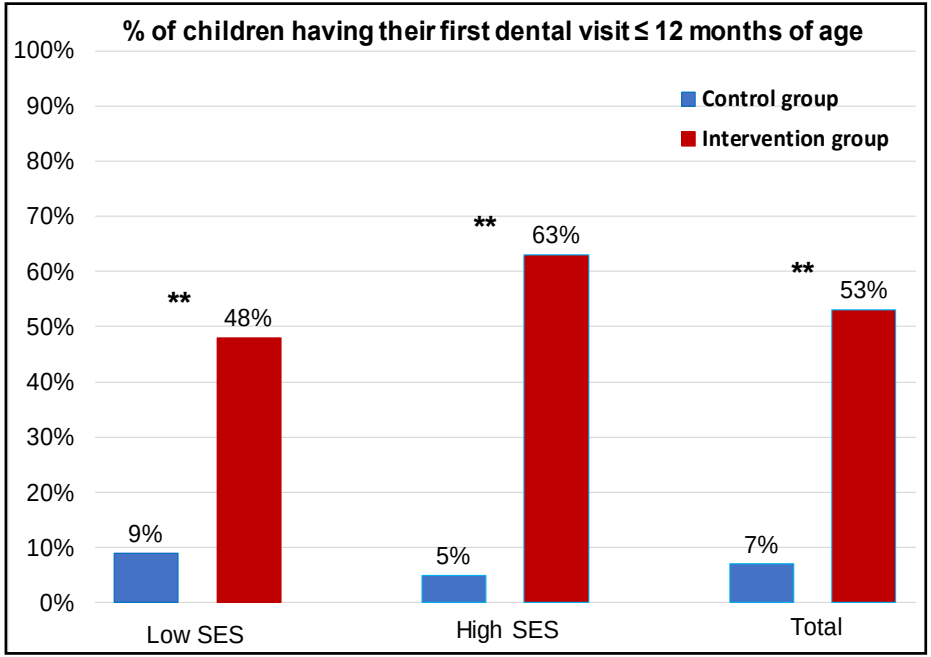
Aim: To assess the effectiveness of early referral of children by well-child clinics for their first dental visit in the Netherlands.

Methods: Children attending well-child clinics were assigned to intervention (I) (n=356) or control group (C) (n=286). The intervention group received at 6 months of age advice to visit a dental clinic. The control group received care as usual (no advice). Parents reported the age of their child at their first dental visit. The child's age was dichotomized into ≤ 12 months and >12 months. Both frequency distributions and odds ratios according to socioeconomic status (SES) were used to describe the differences in the child's age at the first dental visit between I and C.

Results: 53% of children in I versus 7% in C had their first dental visit at the age ≤ 12 months. Differences exist in both low and high SES groups. Children in I had 16 times higher odds of having a first dental visit ≤ 12 months than children in C (95%CI=9.7–26.8); OR=9.7 in the low SES group (95%CI=4.9–19.0) and OR=34.9 in the high SES group (95%CI =15.1-80.7).



** P<0.01, for Pearson's chi-squared test between C and I

Conclusion: Use of well-child clinics to refer children for their first dental visit is an effective way to achieve earlier onset of dental care.

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