



Media Release

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Older Australians going online for better dental health

Losing teeth is not an inevitable consequence of ageing according to researchers in the Oral Health CRC at the University of Melbourne.

That is the clear message coming from a new online learning program to help older Australians maintain and improve their oral health, and keep their natural teeth.

Older adults have been identified by public health agencies as a group highly vulnerable to poor oral health, including dental decay, gum disease (periodontitis) and oral cancer.

Loss of natural teeth often leads to problems with eating and speaking, and further problems in the mouth.

But researchers say that, armed with some basic oral health knowledge and proven techniques for looking after teeth and mouths, older Australians should expect to maintain healthy, natural teeth into older age.

The new web-based oral health education program is a series of ten interactive tutorials developed and trialled by researchers.

Project leader Associate Professor Rodrigo Mariño said the people who took part in the trial embraced the new technology and made positive changes to their dental care routines.

“The learning materials were developed by oral health experts after extensive consultation with older adults,” says Associate Professor Mariño.

“So they specifically address oral health issues for older people, in a way that people can understand and act upon.”

The online program was trialled with adults over the age of 55 from the City of Whittlesea who completed the online tutorials in libraries, community centres and from home.

At the completion of the trial, people had increased their factual knowledge of oral health and disease, and had improved their daily and weekly oral health care.

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The program covers oral health issues that are of particular concern to older people, including decay of the tooth root, periodontitis (gum disease), dry mouth caused by medications for health conditions such as hypertension, gum recession and how to access public dental services.

The series of online tutorials is available for free to the public. Health and aged care professionals can also use the program to encourage better oral health care among patients and residents.

Visit: <http://www.e-dentalez.com/sitio/oral-health-promotion/>

This project was a collaboration between the Oral Health CRC at the University of Melbourne, Bupa Health Foundation and the City of Whittlesea, Victoria.

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