SWEDISH AGENCY FOR HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Associations between oral health and mental health – a systematic map

Aim

The aim of this systematic map is to identify and survey systematic reviews that have investigated associations between oral health and mental health, and to map them to the following areas:

- mental health of people with orofacial problems

- dental care interventions that could improve mental status

- oral health of people with mental illness

- interventions provided by psychiatric or primary care that could improve oral health.

Method

A literature search was performed in January 2024 in the databases Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Embase, Medline and PsycInfo. Altogether 3,448 articles were identified and 169 of them were found to be relevant for this report. Systematic reviews investigating the associations between oral health and mental health are tagged in two interactive maps – one for mental health of people with orofacial problems and one for oral health of people with mental illness. In addition, systematic reviews that have evaluated interventions are tagged in two maps – one for dental care interventions and one for interventions provided by the psychiatric or primary care. Both the screening of the systematic reviews and the assessment of their risk of bias were performed independently by two reviewers using the AMSTAR checklist.

All relevant systematic reviews are mapped in the interactive maps based on studied populations, interventions, and outcomes. The maps also allow for filtering by type of mental illness, type of oral health, age groups, specific interventions, and SBU's risk of bias assessment. The systematic reviews within a specific area can be accessed in the maps through the connecting links.

Results

In the interactive maps, there are 122 reviews that have studied mental health of people with orofacial problems and 114 reviews that studied oral health of people with mental illness. However, there is a limited number of systematic reviews that have studied interventions that can be provided by dental care or the primary/psychiatric care in order to improve mental health or oral health, respectively.

In short, this systematic map reveals that the field is partially covered in terms of systematic reviews and that there is a need for systematic reviews, as well as more research on mental illness and simultaneous oral health problems. For instance, it is clear that mental illness can have adverse effects on oral health and vice versa, and that dental interventions can improve mental health. Likewise, interventions provided by the psychiatric or primary care can improve oral health of people with mental illness. The interactive maps presented in this report provide an overview of the field and can be used by relevant authorities in their decision making as well as by professionals within dentistry, psychiatric care, and primary care.