

*Editorial***Oral Health: Essential for Overall Well-Being and Quality of Life****Rafif Naufi Waskitha Hapsari<sup>1,\*</sup> and Abdullah Al Mamun<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Editor, Health Dynamics<sup>2</sup>Editor-in-Chief, Health Dynamics**Article history**

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Oral health refers to the state of teeth, gums, and entire oral-facial system, which allows people to perform vitally important functions like eating, drinking, breathing, speaking, smelling, tasting, convey several emotions by facial expressions (such as smiling or frowning). It is often an overlooked aspect of wellness, yet its influence extends far beyond the confines of dental care. Research increasingly shows that oral health is a vital component of quality of life, affecting physical, emotional, and social well-being. This editorial aims to explore the complicated relationship between oral health and quality of life, highlighting the need for an inclusive approach to health that binds both dental and general health considerations.

Oral health is a vital aspect of overall well-being, encompassing physical, mental, social, and psychological dimensions essential to quality of life. It is shaped by a person's evolving experiences, perceptions, expectations, and capacity to adapt, along with the values and attitudes held by individuals and communities.<sup>(1)</sup> Poor oral health can lead to significant repercussions, including pain, discomfort, and a diminished ability to engage socially. Conditions such as gum disease and tooth decay not only affect physical health but can also lead to mental health challenges. Studies have shown a strong correlation between oral health conditions and issues such as anxiety and depression, underscoring the importance of addressing dental health in mental health strategies. The recent study by Palomer et al. found that individuals experiencing frequent dental or prosthesis-related discomfort while speaking had higher odds of exhibiting suspected depression.<sup>(2)</sup> Furthermore, the impact of oral health on self-esteem cannot be overstated; individuals with visible oral issues often experience social withdrawal and decreased confidence, further affecting their quality of life and economic well-being.

There are several factors that contribute to oral health disparities. Lifestyle choices, such as an unhealthy diet, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and oral hygiene practices, play a crucial role in determining dental health outcomes. Additionally, socioeconomic status significantly influences access to dental care, with lower-income populations facing greater barriers to achieving and maintaining good oral health. The study by Block et al. found that better oral health is associated with higher quality of life among older adults in Europe.<sup>(3)</sup> Education is another critical determinant; individuals with limited knowledge about oral hygiene are less likely to engage in preventive care. It can also impact specific populations, who face unique challenges related to oral health. For example, children may experience the long-term consequences of untreated dental issues, impacting their development and educational outcomes. The elderly, who often contend with multiple health issues, may

find that poor oral health exacerbates existing conditions, leading to a cycle of declining health. Similarly, individuals with chronic diseases like diabetes may experience increased oral health problems, illustrating the interconnected nature of systemic and oral health.

To address these challenges, public health initiatives, health promotion activities, and relevant research must prioritize oral health awareness and access to healthcare. Integrating oral health assessments into routine medical checkups can help identify at-risk individuals and promote preventive care. Community programs that provide education and resources can empower individuals to adopt better oral hygiene practices and seek necessary dental care. Continued research and policy-making actions are needed to address oral health issues to ensure a healthy lifestyle for everyone and prioritize oral health as a fundamental aspect of overall well-being.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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