

Caries Levels in Saudi Arabian Schoolchildren

T.L. Al Khateeb. D.M. O'Mullane

Medical School, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and WHO Collaborating Centre for Oral Health Services Research, University Dental School, Cork, Ireland

Little information is available on the prevalence of dental caries in Saudi Arabian children. In this project, children, aged 6 (dmft), 12 and 15 (DMFT) years in three cities in Saudi Arabia with various levels of natural fluoride in the drinking water were examined using criteria similar to those used by the National Survey of Children's Dental Health in Ireland [O'Mullane et al.: Stationary Office, Dublin 1986] in which caries was diagnosed at cavitation level and radiographs were not used. A total of 160 children in each age group in Jeddah (fluoride level in drinking water <0.3 ppm), Rabagh (0.8 ppm) and Makkah (2.5 ppm) were examined giving a total sample of 1,440. Four trained and calibrated examiners completed the examinations. The mean dmft in 6-year-olds in Jeddah was 4.6 (\pm 3.9), whilst in Rabagh and Makkah it was 2.1 (\pm 2.3) and 2.7 (\pm 2.0) respectively. The corresponding DMFT Figures for 12-year-olds in the three cities were 3.6 (\pm 2.6), 1.7 (\pm 1.9) and 1.9 (\pm 1.7). The Figures for 15-year-olds in the three cities were 5.2 (\pm 3.3), 2.3 (\pm 2.1) and 2.0 (\pm 1.9) respectively. Caries levels were higher in children attending public schools, especially in Jeddah. The results confirm the inverse relationship between fluoride levels in the drinking water and the prevalence of dental caries in children