

Background: Poor oral health during pregnancy is progressively connected to adverse pregnancy outcomes, as well as preterm low-birth weight infants and morbidity and mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and world wide. In DRC there is no study done to determine the factors influencing dental services utilization among pregnant women. This study assess factors influencing dental services utilization among pregnant women in Bunia referral hospital, in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Objective: The overall objective of this study was to assess the factors influencing utilization of dental services among pregnant women in Bunia referral hospital in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive design and a semi-structured questionnaire were used to collect data from 384 women attending antenatal care in Bunia referral hospital. Chi-square/Fisher's exact test and binary logistics regression analysis were used to examine factors associated with utilization of dental services among pregnant women.

Results: Majority of respondent were young(18 to 27 years). Only 12.12 % reported having visited a dentist of which 88.2% utilized extraction services. The only significant factors associated with low utilization of dental services were the unplayable oral services were not appreciated by mothers because the services were not for their advantage. The awareness of the dental services in Bunia referral hospital (OR, 9.761, 95% CI: 1.495-5.796, P=0.002) and the cost of dental services (OR, 9.406, 95% CI: 1.610-8.698, P= 0.002). And Cultural value that influence dental services was cultural belief (8.130, 95% CI: 1.295-4.030, P= 0.004).

Conclusion: The level of utilization of dental services among pregnant women in Bunia referral hospital is remarkably low. Although pregnant mothers were aware of the availability of dental services, the cost of the services was not affordable for the majority of mothers and cultural belief that dental services in pregnancy could have a negative effect on pregnancy outcomes were associated with utilization of the services among pregnant women in Bunia referral hospital.

Recommendation: Intervention toward outreach dental health services to conducting community health education within the district to emphasizes the importance of dental health services and continuous education to mothers to change attitude toward cultural belief may play a vital role in enhancing the utilization of dental services among pregnant women in Bunia referral hospital.