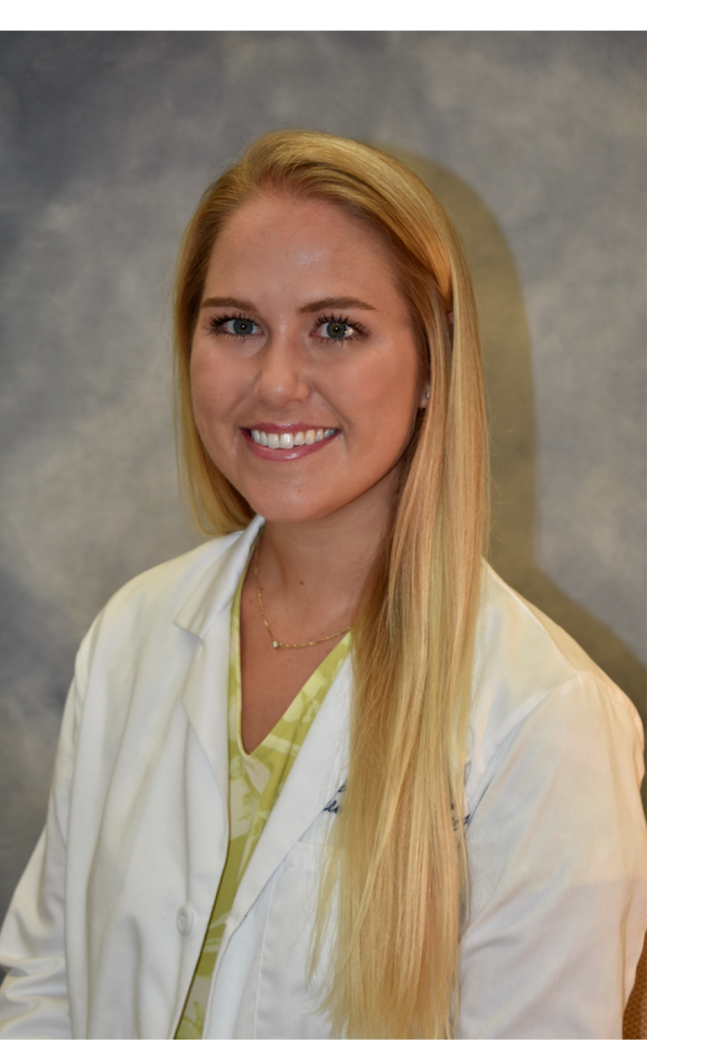


Barriers To Care for Collier County Head Start Children

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INTRODUCTION

Head Start (HS) is a program which was developed for children aged 0-5 years from low-income families to support family well-being and promote child readiness for school(1). The Naples Children Education Foundation (NCEF) Community Outreach Program was founded on a public health initiative to help children with unmet dental needs in Collier County, Florida. The NCEF Community Outreach Program has affiliations with Collier County Public Schools(CCPs) and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) to provide dental screenings at these sites where HS has been implemented. Recent reports found the prevalence of untreated dental caries (UDC) is 20% among children in HS programs in Florida (2). Children with active caries may experience pain and often have more absences and lower grades than children who do not (3). Therefore, it is imperative to examine potential barriers to care for these HS children to ensure their dental care needs are being met.

OBJECTIVES

To assess the prevalence of UDC and potential barriers to dental care for children in Collier County HS programs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Setting: Head Start Outreach Screening in 19 CCPS and 4 RCMA sites

Participants: Children ages 0-5 years enrolled in HS in Collier County
This was a prospective cohort study completed from February 1,2021 - December 31, 2021 of 196 HS children 0-5 years old with UDC in Collier County, Florida.

Data Collection: Pediatric dental residents completed dental screenings at HS programs throughout Collier County, diagnosed and categorized children based on amount of untreated dental decay present. Parents/guardians of children identified in the screenings with UDC were contacted via telephone, and study investigators administered a survey regarding potential barriers to dental care for their child. Data collected for the study included child's caries status, sociodemographic information, and survey information/responses.

Data analysis: Descriptive, bivariate analysis and logistic regression analysis were conducted using SPSS version 27.

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RESULTS

Table 1: Baseline Demographic Variables. Head Start Untreated Dental Caries Children. February-December 2021. Community Outreach Program

*mean age in months (+/- SD) = 54.73 (+/- 7.497)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	120	61.20%
Female	76	38.80%
Language		
English	35	35%
Spanish	60	60%
Other	5	5%
Age (in months)*		
35-45	27	13.80%
46-56	70	35.70%
57+	99	50.50%

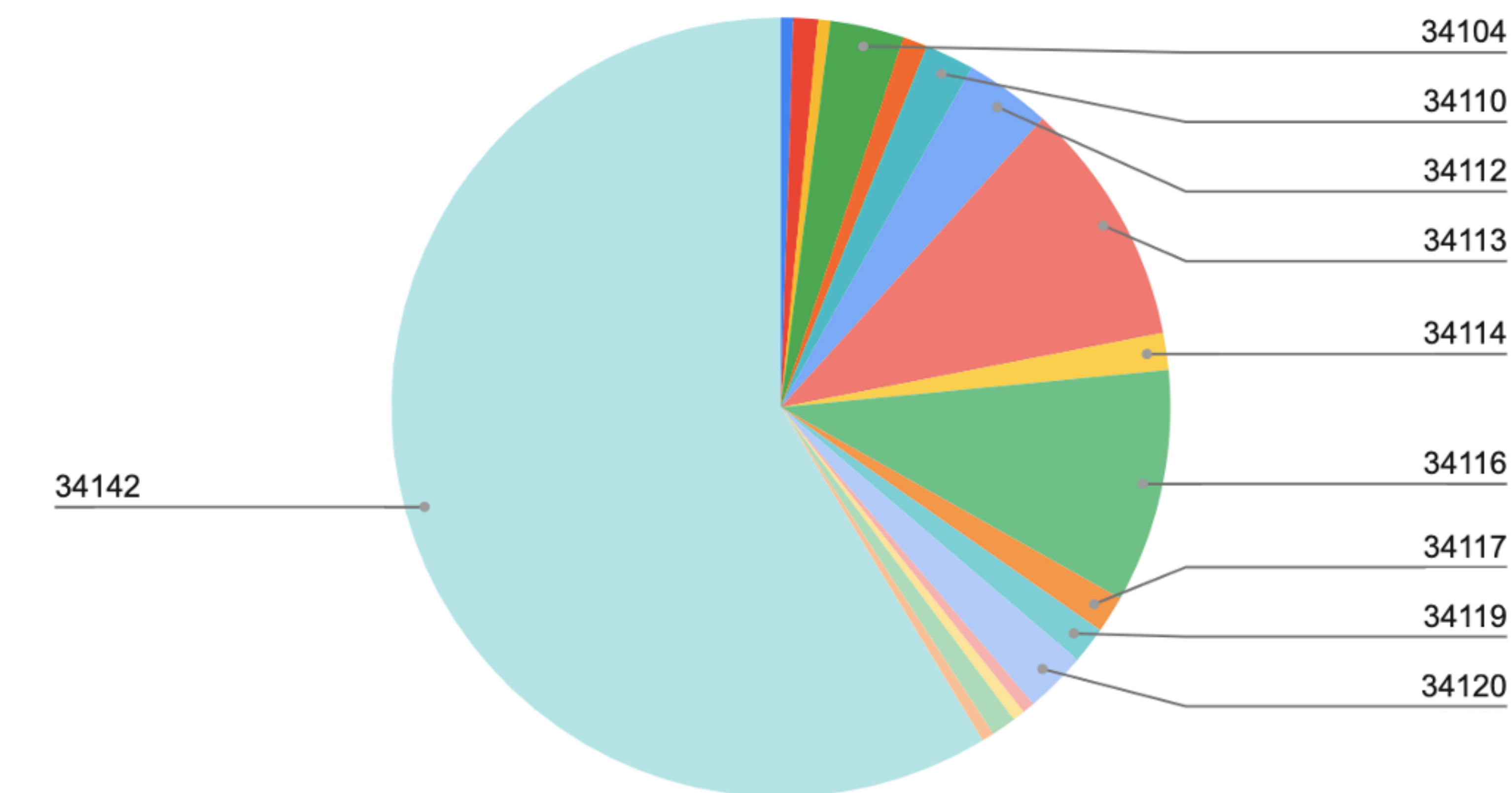
Table 2: Parent/Guardian responses to follow up survey. February-December 2021.

Survey Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Phone Contact Achieved		
Yes	135	68.90%
No	61	31.10%
Dental Visit Since Screening		
Yes	67	34.20%
No	60	30.60%
Unknown	69	35.20%
Parent Aware of Decay		
Yes	99	50.50%
No	30	15.30%
Unknown	67	34.20%
Insurance		
Yes	112	57.10%
No	16	8.20%
Unknown	68	34.7%
COVID Affect To Have Dental Visit		
Yes	43	21.90%
No	84	42.90%
Unknown	69	35.20%

PREDICTOR	p value	ODDS RATIO	95 % Confidence Interval
Parent Awareness of Decay	0.003	4.005	1.58, 10.14
Insurance Type, Medicaid	0.016	5.237	1.36, 20.17
Covid affected	0.610	0.828	0.400, 1.712

Table 3: Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis for predictors of dental visits.

Percent UDC per County Region



- Eighteen of 26 Collier County zip codes were reported within the study population. The majority (59%) of subjects were from code 34142.
- Barriers to care reported by caregivers included: lengthy wait for appointments, parents not having time off from work, lack of transportation, and closures related to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- This study did not find the total caries prevalence within the population due to limited access to the data containing the number of caries free children present during the dental screenings.

CONCLUSIONS

- Social factors were barriers reported in this study. Efforts in community outreach might address these access to care issues.
- Parent awareness and patients having Medicaid dental insurance were found to be statistically significant in having a dental visit after the screening was completed.
- The COVID-19 pandemic did not show to have an impact on patients having a dental visit after the screening was completed.
- County area 34142 can be considered more rural and includes the city of Immokalee, FL. There are 0 listed pediatric dentist within a 20 miles radius of this zip code (4). Access to care may be a barrier to care for this population.
- Future studies are needed to evaluate the percentage of untreated dental decay in Collier County comparative to the national percentage.