



School-Based Dental Programs & COVID-19: Eliminating Barriers to Dental Care

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Introduction/Background

- Bringing Smiles Comprehensive Care (BSCC) program was established in early 2017 by New York University College of Dentistry (NYUCD) in partnership with New York City Department of Education and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The goal of this program is the deliver accessible, comprehensive, and sustainable care to children who may otherwise be unlikely or unable to seek dental care elsewhere.
- The program was designed to help overcome barriers to dental care that many families face, such as limited transportation, limited time available to attend dental appointments, and a shortage of dental providers who accept public insurance plans. BSCC helps eliminate these barriers by setting up mobile dental clinics in selected schools to provide comprehensive care using dental students under the supervision of NYUCD faculty and postdoctoral students.
- Services provided at the schools include examinations, radiographs, preventative care, restorations, pulpotomies, SSCs, and simple extractions.

Objectives

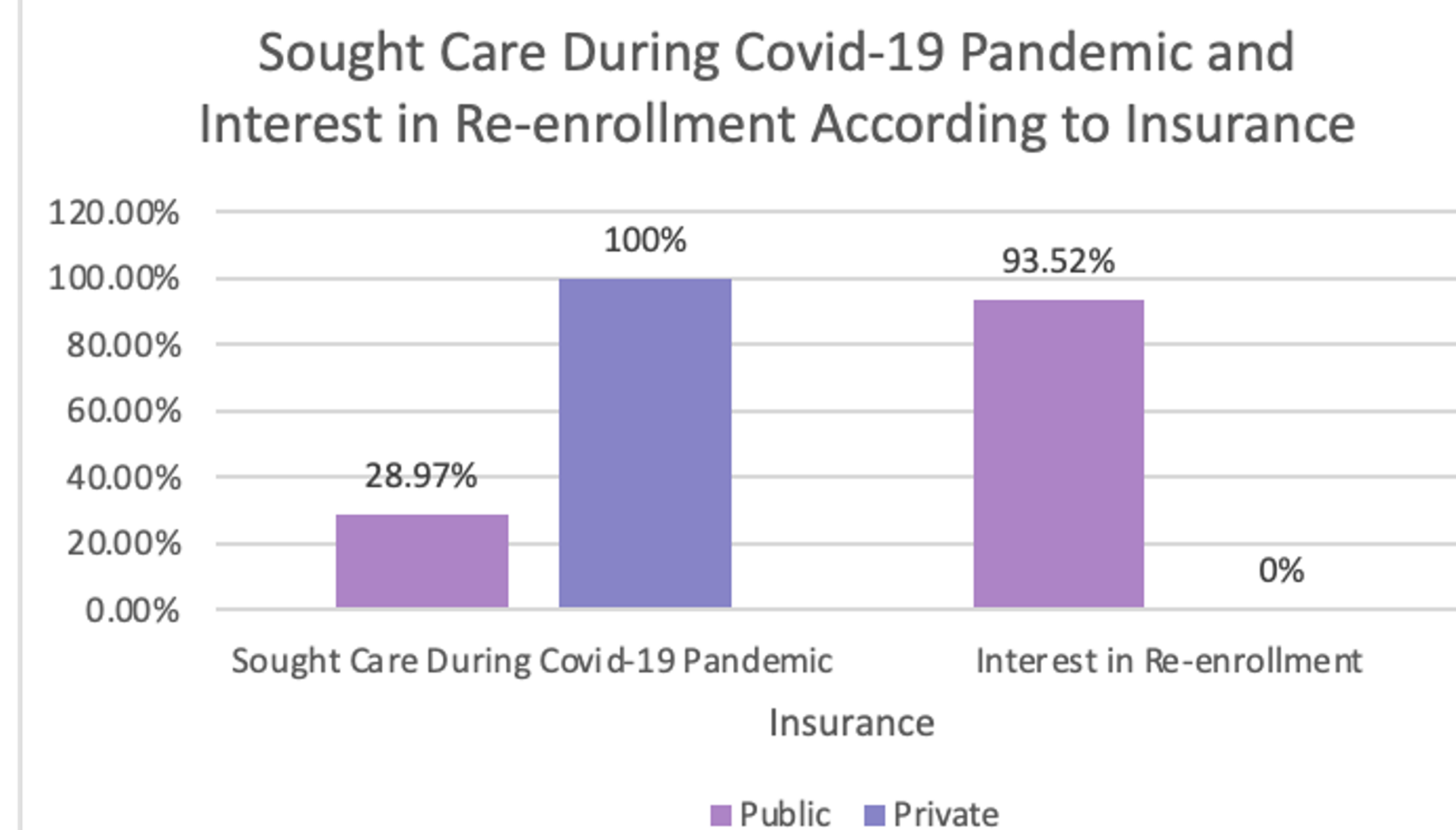
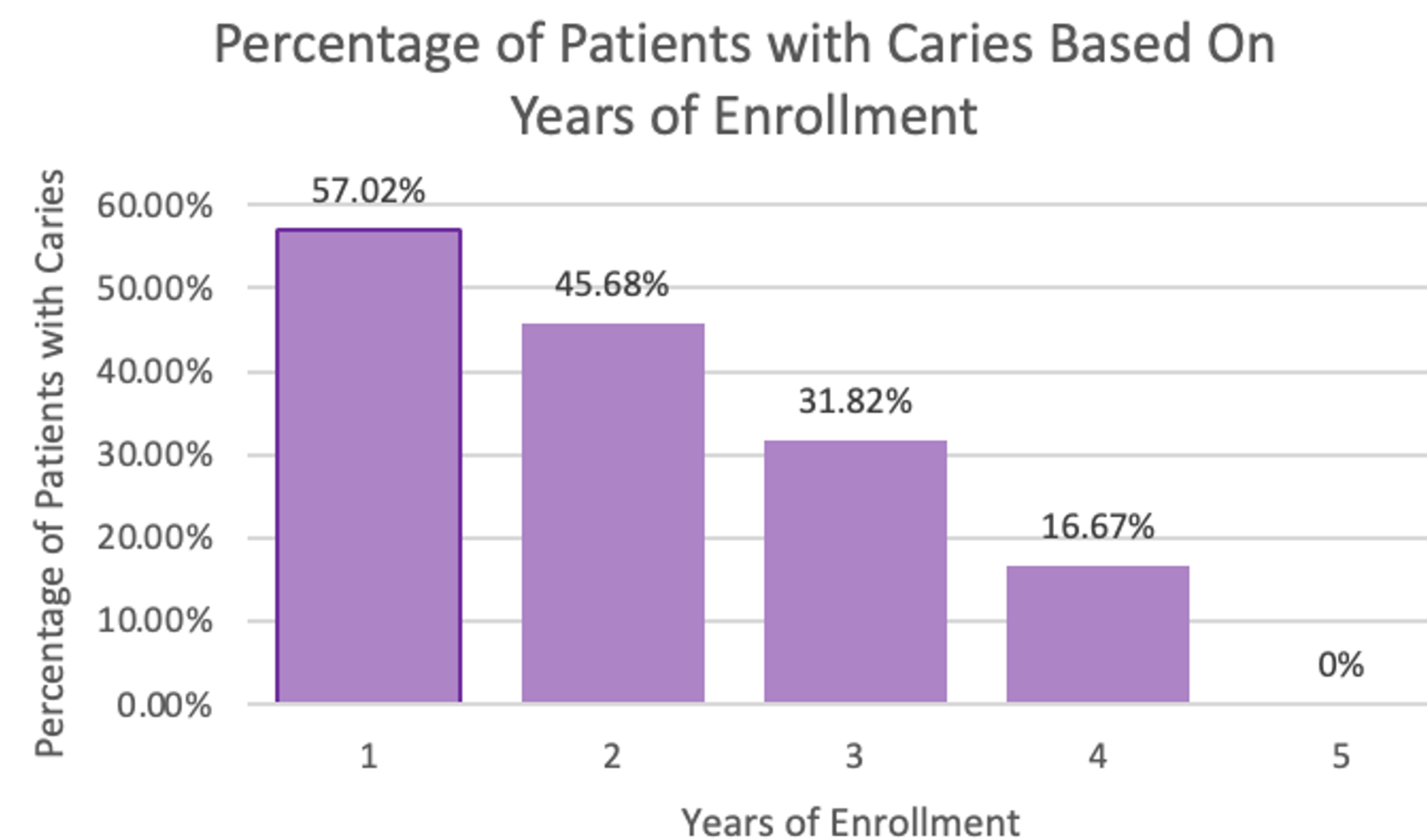
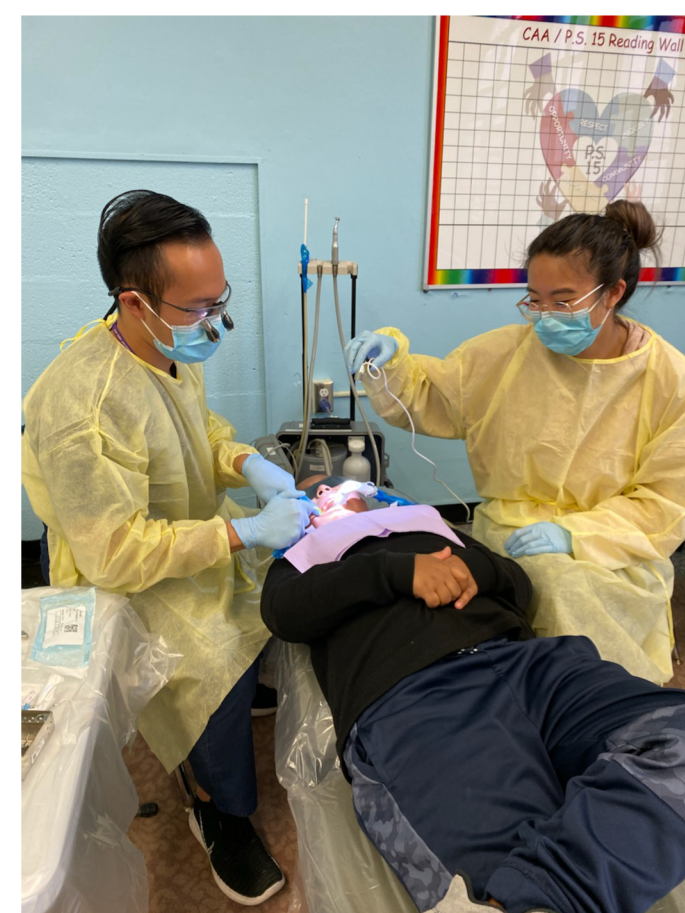
- The primary objective of this study is to determine how BSCC has impacted oral health status and access to dental care for the children in the selected schools.
- A secondary objective is to determine how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted access to care in children who rely on BSCC for their dental care.

Methods

- A retrospective chart review, which included annual re-enrollment questionnaires, was conducted of children ages five to thirteen enrolled and treated in the BSCC Program from the time period September 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021. IRB approval was granted by NYU and exemptions were granted by the NYCDOH and NYCDOE.
- The following de-identified information was extrapolated to determine demographic information, years of enrollment in BSCC, interest in re-enrollment in BSCC, presence of caries at each year of enrollment, and parent reported dental care during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Data from the Axiom charts were input into REDCap to perform chi-squared tests for statistical analysis.
- A total of 170 charts were recorded from BSCC. Of 170, 56 were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. A total of 114 were assessed.

Results

BSCC Statistics	
<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Interest in Re-enrollment	88.60%
Underrepresented Minority	88.60%
Non-English Speaker	37.72%
Public Insurance	95.58%
Time as a Barrier to Care	32.46%
Sought Care during Covid-19 Pandemic	31.86%



Discussion

- BSCC evaluates interested schools based on their size, location, and community need. Community need is determined by the proportion of students who received free or reduced lunch at the school.
- As seen by the statistics, 88.60% of the students enrolled in BSCC fall under the title of an underrepresented minority. 37.72% of these students also come from homes where English is not the primary language.
- Furthermore, the majority of these students come from families with low socioeconomic status and rely on public insurance to afford healthcare. There are significantly less practitioners who accept public insurance compared to private insurance. This means that 95.58% of these students have a harder time finding a dentist who is willing to see them.
- BSCC is fulfilling its purpose in providing care to those who need it most. Nearly one-third of the families of students enrolled in BSCC reported “time” as a barrier to dental care. By providing care at school, our program helps parents not have to worry about taking time off of work to bring their children to receive dental care. Comprehensive care is provided to the students during scheduled appointments, and parents are informed via phone call. If the child were to need more complicated treatment not offered at the school, the parent would have a direct referral to NYUCD and would only need to bring their child for treatment.
- In its five years of existence, BSCC has had a positive impact on the oral health status of its patients. The longer a child is enrolled in our program, the more likely they are to be caries free.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, defined in this study as March 2020 to March 2021, 71.03% of the students with public insurance did not see a dentist. This shows how heavily this population relies on BSCC to provide routine dental care in a timely manner.

Conclusion

- The percentage of patients with caries decreases with each year of enrollment in BSCC.
- Only 28.97% of patients with public insurance sought dental care during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to 100% of patients with private insurance.
- Following the Covid-19 pandemic, 93.52% of patients with public insurance were interested in re-enrolling in BSCC for their dental care.