Color coding key: Context | Framing the Knowledge Gap | Significance

Health professional faculty have been tasked with integrating oral health competencies into their curricula. However, these faculty struggle to integrate oral health competencies because they have not been properly trained and are not oral health specialists (REF). The need to integrate oral health competencies arose out of the oral health crisis. In 2000, a Surgeon General’s report called upon healthcare providers to help fight the oral health crisis (REF). Ten years later, the Affordable Care Act required healthcare providers to work in teams and deliver integrated care (REF). Nurses, physicians, and physician assistants must provide basic oral health exams, preventative oral health education, and referrals to dentists. In order for these professionals to meet the mandate, they must be properly trained. Healthcare professional education programs have taken up this task. Research indicates that health professional faculty face barriers and challenges to integration which include lack of leadership support (REF), lack of oral health education (REF), and professional hierarchies (REF). In addition, researchers of curriculum change have said that faculty like to have control of their curricula and are hesitant to embrace major changes (REF; REF; REF). While barriers and challenges to oral health integration have been identified for health professions faculty, it is unknown what faculty’s experiences are with oral health integration in the context of curriculum change. It is important to examine faculty members’ experiences with oral health curricular integration because millions of Americans suffer from poor oral health even though oral disease is largely preventable (REF). A large portion of the population does not visit the dentist regularly but does visit their primary care provider (REF). Oral disease can be prevented when caught early, which will be possible if all healthcare providers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to address their patients’ oral health. Understanding health professional faculty members’ experiences with oral health integration might uncover strategies for successful curriculum changes, thus helping future practitioners become better equipped to diagnose oral disease. As practitioners become better equipped, they can help reduce the widespread oral disease nationwide.