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**SHRI DHARMASTHALA MANJUNATHESHWARA  
UNIVERSITY, DHARWAD, KARNATAKA**

**STRENGTHENING PRIMARY ORAL HEALTH CARE  
KNOWLEDGE AMONG ACCREDITED SOCIAL HEALTH  
ACTIVISTS BY ORAL HEALTH EDUCATION AT THE RURAL  
PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE'S IN DHARWAD TALUK,  
KARNATAKA.**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION:** Accredited social health activists (ASHA) who play a major role in health promotion in rural community work at grass root level and also known as Frontline health activists in the community and are involved in health education and community mobilization towards utilizing the Health services in India. ASHA workers can be helpful in changing the attitude towards Oral Health as they play a pivotal role in giving primary health care to the community. ASHA workers get rigorous training in various health aspects, but oral health is given a low priority in their training curriculum. They should be trained to focus on integration of oral health care activities along with Antenatal and postnatal care, Infant care, Immunization of children and Geriatric Health care.

**AIM:** To assess the effectiveness of oral health education based on "Training manual on Health Promotion for Health workers" introduced by NOHP Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India to strengthen the Primary oral health care knowledge Rural ASHA workers at the primary health centres in Dharrwad Taluk.

**METHODOLOGY:** Four rural primary health centers at Dharwad taluk were recruited in the study and randomly assigned to an intervention or control group. The baseline data regarding ASHA worker's Primary Oral health care knowledge was collected using pre-tested self-administered questionnaire prepared in local language kannada. The questionnaire was divided into six domains as follows; Demographic details, normal oral anatomy and common Dental diseases, child, maternal and infant, oral cancer and geriatric primary oral health care. After one month oral health education was provided based on the NOHP training manual on oral health promotion for Health workers to intervention group. Post-test assessment was done

one month after intervention using same questionnaire. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 21.0 version software.

**RESULTS:** A total of 124 ASHA workers participated in the study. The mean knowledge scores at pre-test were  $23.18 \pm 8.00$  and  $23.50 \pm 5.08$  and post-test after intervention were  $32.79 \pm 4.85$  and  $38.58 \pm 5.71$  in control and intervention group respectively ( $p < 0.001$ ). A chi-square test was applied to compare pre and post test scores for knowledge and practice questions. In intervention group, each domain post-test knowledge scores increased; predominantly 1st permanent tooth eruption age ( $p = 0.04$ ), caries prevention with fluoride ( $p = 0.004$ ), transport media for avulsed teeth ( $p < 0.001$ ), pernicious oral habits and early exfoliation of deciduous teeth leading to teeth irregularities ( $p < 0.001$ ), safe trimester in pregnant ladies for dental treatment ( $p < 0.001$ ), signs and symptoms of oral cancer ( $p < 0.001$ ). The practice of primary oral health care in children ( $p < 0.001$ ), maternal and infants ( $p < 0.001$ ) and geriatric groups ( $p = 0.005$ ) increased compared to baseline in intervention group.

**CONCLUSION:** Utilisation of "Training manual on Oral Health Promotion for Health workers" introduced by NOHP Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in oral health education training, has a potential to increase the knowledge and practice of primary oral health care among the ASHA workers. There by, oral health education based on the manual in their local language may play a key role in oral health promotion of rural population.

**KEY WORDS:** Oral health education, knowledge, practice, ASHA workers and oral health promotion.