

Panoramic Radiography as an Oral Examination Tool

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In South Korea, a national health care system provides periodic health examination to the subscribers and their dependents of national health insurance. Ministry of Health and Welfare declares health examination contents and expenses according to national health insurance law and it's implementing ordinances. The intention of health examination is to identify diseases in a community early, thus enabling earlier intervention and management in the hope to reduce mortality and suffering from diseases. Also, the data from examination can be used for public health promotion. The annual dental examination is a content of health examination and consists of visual inspection and a questionnaire. However, unlike improvements in medical examination, dental examination method has not changed from the past. Some says dental examination is just a pretense, because of poor environment such as lack of equipment, limited time to thorough examination and consultation. The rate of dental examination had fallen to about 21%. 57.8% of subjects answered current dental examination was not satisfactory. In another report, 55.8% of subjects answered that they wanted more accurate dental examination. Therefore, one of the recent suggestions for this problem is the introduction of panoramic radiography to improve the efficacy of national oral examination.

Panoramic radiography is a simplified extra oral procedure which visualizes the entire maxillo-mandibular region on a single film. Since its introduction into the general practice of dentistry, panoramic radiography has become a popular and valuable diagnostic tool. Panoramic radiography has been used for routine screening of patients at various institutions and private clinic because it allows examination of the entire dentition, alveolar bone, temporomandibular joints, and adjacent structures easily. The purpose of this review is to assess the diagnostic ability of panoramic radiography in dental diseases compared with clinical examination and to evaluate the possibility of panoramic

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radiography as a national oral examination tool.

Radiographs provide critical information to dental caries detection. Kidd and Pitts reviewed the literatures and concluded the use of bitewing radiography was essential if much a proximal caries was not to be missed. For this reason, most of previous studies have compared the caries detection between panoramic and intraoral radiographs, and there were few studies comparing the panoramic radiography and clinical examination. Panoramic radiography shows both jaws and their respective dentition continuously on a single film by quick and simple procedure. And it does not require any inconveniences to the patients such as poking by film or pocket probing. Because of the convenience, panoramic radiography has been widely used in screening and in epidemiological studies. Introduction of panoramic radiography will improve the efficacy of national oral examination and will lead to detection of oral diseases earlier. Early detection of oral diseases will results in better prognosis.