Update on evidence relating to population oral health

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The presentation will summarise the latest available evidence from the ARCPOH and the Centre for Research Excellence in Primary Oral Health Care about the status of rural compared to metropolitan oral health in Australia.

The presentation will include a focus on the oral health of rural adults and of rural children attending Australian school dental services. It will discuss the factors that influence adult oral health in rural and regional areas. It will include an update on the association between child oral health status and residential location classified by remoteness status using the latest available data to ascertain if poorer rural oral health was associated with being Indigenous, or with less access to the benefits of water fluoridation, or being of lower socioeconomic status (SES) than children who reside in major city areas.

With adults, dental caries experience and the number of decayed and missing teeth was greater in non-capital city than capital city areas. This was maintained after controlling for SES, preventive dental behaviours, and access to dental care. However, the inclusion of a lifetime fluoride variable resulted in lifetime dental caries experienced and the number of decayed teeth per person no longer being significantly different between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. With children, even after allowing for whether the child was Indigenous, from a fluoridated area and SES, child oral health was poorer in rural areas than major city areas.