Title: Prevalence of *Candida* species in the oral cavity of elderly users of a clinical dental school

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Abstract:

The increase of the number of elderly in the population requires a special attention from various sectors of society, especially the team involved in health care for this age group. Regarding the oral health, elderly patients have a clinical condition characterized by tooth loss, periodontal disease and presence of removable dentures considered responsible for the occurrence of candidiasis. This study aimed to identify the prevalence of *Candida* species in the oral cavity of elderly patients, with or without injuries, users of a clinical school at FACS / UNIVALE. The study included 31 patients (over 60 years) of both sexes, who were in treatment in the mentioned clinic during the first semester of 2015. For data collection, a questionnaire was applied in semi-structured interviews, with points related to sociodemographic data and general and oral health. Samples from oral swabs of the patients were plated on Sabouraud dextrose agar for isolation of *Candida* samples. The yeasts were identified by presumptive tests through the pigment production in CRHOMagarCandida medium. The results showed that the average age of the elderly was 68 years. Regarding gender, 61% were female and 39% male. We detected that 58% of the patients had at least one systemic disease, and the majority (77%) was using more than one medication, what can contribute to changes in the oral cavity. Regarding the use of prosthesis, 58% of the patients use some type of removable prosthesis. Yeasts were detected in 55% of patients, being *Candida albicans* the most prevalent species (88%). 54% of the elderly showed good oral hygiene condition and the prosthesis. It can be concluded that the presence of *Candida* is frequent in the studied patients, probably due to predisposing factors such as systemic diseases, use of daily medications and use of removable prosthesis, increasing the susceptibility to candidiasis.

Keywords: Elderly, Geriatric Dentistry, Oral Health, Candidiasis.