Improving the Quality of Dentistry (IQuaD): a cluster factorial randomised controlled trial comparing the effectiveness and cost–benefit of oral hygiene advice and/or periodontal instrumentation with routine care for the prevention and management of periodontal disease in dentate adults attending dental primary care

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Almost half of adults in the UK show signs of gum disease. It is a largely preventable disease, with treatment usually taking the form of self-care, including tooth brushing and dentist cleaning, which is often called ‘scale and polish’. In this study, we wanted to find out whether or not the advice patients are given and the cleaning they receive from the dentist work and offer good value for money.

A total of 1877 adults who regularly attended 63 different NHS dental practices across Scotland and north-east England were involved. The adults had early signs of gum disease and were randomly chosen to be offered a scale and polish every 6 months, every 12 months or not at all. They received normal advice or personalised advice depending on what dental practice they attended. The recruited adults completed study surveys every year. They also had clinical measurements of their mouth taken by study staff at the start of the study and 3 years later.

After 3 years, there was no evidence of differences in gum health, whether a scale and polish was carried out every 6 or 12 months or only when either the patient requested it or the dentist recommended it for clinical reasons. There was also no added benefit of providing personalised oral health advice. However, patients value, and are willing to pay for, cleaning advice and scale and polish, but are willing to pay more for scale and polish than for advice.
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