Comment

OdontoSeñas 2.0, towards an inclusive Dentistry.

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Most Deaf people have limited access to formal education, so most of them are illiterate.[1] This makes it difficult for members of this community to access health services, including dental care.[1,2] On the other hand, dental staff lack the adequate training and skills to meet the needs of the Deaf patients, mainly due to communication issues.[1,3] Given the above, the Deaf population show high levels of oral morbidity and report feelings of discrimination by the dental staff.[1,3,4]

In this context, a team of dentists, interpreters of Chilean Sign Language (LSCh), Deaf people, and computer programmers developed OdontoSeñas, a free app for smartphones, funded by SENADIS (National Disability Service, available at http://www.senadis.gob.cl/). Odontoseñas uses videos in LSCh, the natural communication method of the Deaf community, which is also recognized in the Chilean Law on Persons with Disabilities. Odontoseñas gives relevant information about dental care, facilitating diagnosis and treatment, improving oral health care for the Deaf patient.[1] Access to dental care depends on information regarding state health programs, such as AUGE-GES (Explicit Health Guarantees, available at http://www.supersalud.gob.cl). AUGE-GES covers various health problems and conditions, providing financial support and adequate treatment within the deadlines established by the law. The information available regarding these Guarantees is inaccessible to the vast majority of the Deaf community, since it is only available in written form,[2] and therefore, OdontoSeñas has had to be updated.

OdontoSeñas 2.0 seeks to inform the Deaf Community about dental health problems and conditions covered by AUGE-GES. The development team is working on interpreting in LSCh the information provided by the Chilean Ministry of Health. The development team is making videos that will be available for downloading in Odontoseñas and in social networks for free. Information in LSCh will allow Deaf people to exercise their right of access to AUGE-GES, just like the rest of the Chilean population. Initiatives such as OdontoSeñas allow the Deaf patient to become involved in their own dental treatment, reducing discrimination feelings by the health staff and promoting inclusion. OdontoSeñas has already exceeded 1,400 downloads from PlayStore and AppStore, receiving very positive comments and ratings from dentists and Deaf patients. This makes clear the need to develop similar initiatives in other areas.

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