Use of Preventive Dental Care Among Medicaid-Enrolled, School-Aged US Children in Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Families: Trends in Pennsylvania from 2005 through 2010

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OBJECTIVES: We describe trends in receipt of preventive dental care among Medicaid-enrolled children in Pennsylvania between 2005 and 2010, comparing the US children of immigrants with their co-ethnic peers in nonimmigrant families.

METHODS: We analyzed Pennsylvania Medicaid claims, birth records, and census data for children born in Pennsylvania and enrolled in Medicaid for 10 or more months during any of the calendar years assessed.

RESULTS: Receipt of preventive dental care was more likely among Latino children in immigrant families than among their peers in nonimmigrant families; also, it was more likely among White children in immigrant families than among their peers in nonimmigrant families. Rates of preventive dental care use among African American and Asian children in immigrant and nonimmigrant families were comparable. From 2005 to 2010, the percentage of Latino children in nonimmigrant families who received preventive dental care increased from 33% to 61%. Changes in other groups were significant but less dramatic.

CONCLUSIONS: Receipt of preventive dental care has increased among Medicaid-enrolled children in Pennsylvania, with marked gains among Latino children. Within each racial/ethnic group, the children of immigrants were either more likely than or equally likely as children in nonimmigrant families to receive care.

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