

# Using teledentistry to provide orthodontic services to disadvantaged children

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Socially disadvantaged children have limited access to orthodontic services. A team of scientists studied a novel approach using teleconferencing to determine the possibility of increasing access to limited orthodontic treatment for these children. The team reported its findings today during the 37th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Dental Research.

An orthodontic specialist at a remote site used teleconferencing to supervise a general dentist who provided limited orthodontic services to Medicaid-eligible children in a public health clinic in Toppenish, Washington.

Treatment results of the general dentist were compared with those obtained by orthodontic graduate students who had direct orthodontist supervision on site at a public health clinic in Seattle, Washington. The two groups of children and the treatments provided were similar.

The study demonstrated that both groups of children had significant orthodontic improvement. No differences were detected between the general dentist who was supervised by an orthodontist using teleconferencing from a remote site and the orthodontic residents who were trained by an orthodontist on site.

The results of this study suggest that early orthodontic treatment provided by a sufficiently trained general dentist and supervised remotely by an orthodontic specialist via teleconference is a viable

approach to reducing the severity of malocclusion in populations of disadvantaged children where referral to an orthodontist is not feasible.

Source: International & American Association for Dental Research

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