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Australia raises concerns over lack of research funding for treating oral disorders

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Major research funding schemes aren't keeping up with the burden of oral diseases, a new study finds



Major government research funding schemes aren’t keeping up with the burden of oral diseases, according to a new study by researchers from the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney, the University of Queensland and the University of Adelaide in Australia.

The study used a Fair Research Funding (FRF) index to investigate and compare Australian government research funding schemes for oral health science with other disciplines from the burden of disease perspective.

Funding schemes that were examined in the study included the Australian Research Council (ARC), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and Medical Research Future Funds grants (MRFF).

The results showed the total NHMRC funding for dental disorders between 2017 to 2021 was $15 million, which equates to 0.23 per cent of total NHMRC funding for the top 75 diseases with the highest disease burden.

Funding allocated towards oral science by the ARC and MRFF was also very limited, with $3.43 million and $1.88 million, respectively.

In comparison, while immunological diseases and environmental & occupational health are not on the Australian burden of disease list, the NHMRC funded $381.6 million and $87.7 million, respectively, for these areas in 2017-2021.

The study concluded that oral disorders have the lowest and most inequitable amount of Australian government support when associated with disease burden.

University of Melbourne Professor Alastair Sloan, a lead researcher on the study, said more dedicated oral sciences research is essential to addressing inequalities in population oral health.