

# Assessment of Oral Health Status and Treatment Needs among Elderly Tibetan Refugee Population in Shimla City: A Cross-sectional Study

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## Abstract

**Background:** Tibetans have lived in India as refugees since 1959, and addressing their health needs is a moral responsibility. Community healthcare for refugees often neglects oral health, giving it lower priority than other health issues, particularly among underprivileged groups. Age is a significant sociodemographic factor, as oral health tends to deteriorate in the elderly due to tooth loss and periodontal problems. Due to insufficient comprehensive data, a need was felt for conducting this study in Shimla city. **Objectives:** To assess oral health status and treatment needs among elderly Tibetan refugees in Shimla city and establish valid baseline data. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted (May–October 2022) among the entire elderly Tibetan population ( $\geq 60$  years) in Shimla. Oral health status and treatment needs were recorded using the World Health Organization Oral Health Assessment Form (2013). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, with  $P < 0.05$  considered statistically significant. **Results:** Among the study population, 49% were males and 51% were females, mostly in the 60–69 age group. Dental caries prevalence was 78.4%, and the mean DMFT score was 17.69, significantly higher among males compared to females. Periodontal disease was observed in 63.7% of participants, with a higher prevalence in the 60–69 age group. **Conclusion:** The study revealed poor oral health among the elderly Tibetan refugee population. Treatment needs increased steadily with age, highlighting the need for targeted oral health care services for this vulnerable population.

**Key words:** Acculturation, oral health status, refugees, Tibetans