Abstract

Older immigrants in Canada are an ever-growing segment of the aging population, which triggers a need to understand their oral health and dental-services use when compared to non-immigrant seniors. In this regard, this study is a secondary data analysis of data from the 2008/09 Canadian Community Health Survey: Healthy Aging component, that included 30,865 respondents aged 45 and over. The outcome variables were self-reported oral health and dentist visits. Descriptive statistics and binary and multivariable logistic regression were performed. Characteristics of the total study population showed that 38.5% were between the ages of 45-54 years, 51.9% were females and 87.9% had excellent to good oral health. Among immigrants, 50.6% were females, 49.1% had no dental insurance and 71.2% had visited a dentist in the last year. The majority (39.9%) of non-immigrants were 45-54 years of age and 89.5% had excellent/very good/good oral health. Results indicate household income and level of education are significant predictors for both immigrant and non-immigrant seniors. Significant predictors for immigrant seniors include age, sex, marital status, household income, level of education and physician visits, while for non-immigrant seniors, household income and level of education were significant. Approaches for improving the oral health of immigrant seniors include: incorporating oral health education, dental screening, and awareness-raising of oral health in community-based initiatives. Approaches for improving dental utilization among immigrant seniors include: making dental care part of Canada’s universal health-care system, changing legislation to improve the availability and access to dental insurance, and awareness-raising of existing dental public health resources.