A functional understanding of oral health information is essential for positive oral health outcomes. Objectives: To validate the Test of Functional Health Literacy in Dentistry (TOFHLiD), a new instrument modeled after a literacy test (TOFHLA) used in medicine. Methods: 102 parents of pediatric dental patients were administered the TOFHLiD and TOFHLA. The TOFHLiD has 2 parts. A reading comprehension section contained three passages: patient instructions after topical fluoride application, consent for dental treatment, and Medicaid rights and responsibilities (score: 0-50). A second section assessed numerical ability with questions about a toothpaste label, an appointment card, and prescriptions for systemic fluoride (score: 0-50). Construct validity was assessed by testing associations between overall TOFHLiD scores (0-100) and 3 measures of oral health (parental ratings of their own and child's oral health on a 5-point scale from "excellent" to "poor", and oral health related quality of life measured with OHIP-14) using bivariate and multivariate analyses. Results: Most participants were female (88%), white (63%), non-Hispanic (89%), and married (67%). Mean scores for TOFHLiD and TOFHLA were 93.7 (±5.2, range 77-100) and 87.5 per person (±7.0, range 68-100), respectively. The reading section's mean scores were TOFHLiD: 47.2 (±2.5, range 36-50) and TOFHLA: 48.8 (±1.6, range 42-50). The means for the numerical sections were 46.2 (±3.9, range 33-50) for TOFHLiD and 38.5 (±6.3 range 20-50) for TOFHLA. Scores for the two tests were not correlated (0.34, NS).

TOFHLiD was correlated with parent's OHIP-14 (P=0.05) and child's oral health status (P=0.02) in bivariate analyses. In multivariate OLS regression TOFHLiD was correlated with child's dental health status (P=0.05) and OHIP-14 (P=0.01). Conclusions: Preliminary results support TOFHLiD's validity and suggest it captures a concept unique from medical literacy. Further research on the use of TOFHLiD in other populations is needed. Support sources: UNC Research Fellowship and NIDCR Grant #1K22DE14743

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