A tooth per child?
Kaare Christensen, David Gaist, Bernard Jeune, James W Vaupel

“An child, a tooth” is how a common proverb (in German [ein Kind, ein Zahn], Danish [et barn, en tand], Russian, and Japanese) quantifies the cost to mothers of childbearing. We used the Longitudinal Study of Ageing Danish Twins (LSADT) to test whether the number of children a woman has is related to the number of teeth she ends up losing.

The LSADT comprises twins aged 73 or older in the nationwide Danish Twin Registry. In 1995 and 1997, 2978 individuals—77% of the twins—were interviewed. Information on teeth, fertility, and social status was obtained for 97% of them. Twins and their spouses were assigned to one of five social classes, with responders being assigned to the social status of their spouse (alive or deceased) if it was clear.3,4

No such relationship was found for male twin pairs. In historic and prehistoric populations, caries and loss of teeth increased the risk of death.5 The long-term costs of childbearing on women’s health may have been substantial and they may still be significant.

This study was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Aging, US (P01-AG08761). The activities of the Danish Center for Demographic Research are supported by a grant from the Danish National Research Foundation.

---


---

Department of Nephrology, Sendai Shakaiken Hospital, 3-16-1 Tsutsumimachi, Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi, 981-8501 Japan (T Furuta)