The relationship between poor oral hygiene and the risk of systemic diseases such as pneumonia, diabetes, arthritis and heart disease in the elderly are already widely described in the literature. In Portugal, the number of hospitalization for pneumonia in the elderly population from nursing houses is increasing, but still there is little preventive policy.

**METHODOLOGY**

A cross-sectional study was carried out over two years among people over 64 years old in 235 nursing houses in Mainland Portugal. The DMFT (Decayed, Missing and Filled Teeth) and Lobene Modified Gingival Index standardized criteria were used according to World Health Organization.

**OBJECTIVES**

We aimed to assess the prosthetic status and the oral hygiene habits in elderly Portuguese people from nursing homes, and to improve caregivers expertise and translate the knowledge into action by addressing policy-makers.

**SUMMARY**

Of the 3586 elderly people observed, the mean age was 81.9 years old with a female predominance (70%). We found a high prevalence of edentulous (55.47%). The mean DMFT index was 26.33 with 30.4% of dental caries and a mean of 3.04 caries (SD ± 4.8) per person. The mean Modified Gingival Index was 2.23. We observed significant reduction in Modified Gingival Index when increased the number of daily brushes (p<0.05).

**CONCLUSION**

The studied population had poor oral health. Therefore it is of great importance to prepare adequate protocols to improve oral health care among the institutionalized elderly population. Preventive programs like “Smiles door to door (SDTD)” may have great impact at low cost by enhancing general health through oral health intervention.