

Knowledge and Awareness of Medical Practitioners about Dentistry in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Ashish Saini¹ Pranav Kumar Singh^{2*} Vandana Aditya Pant³ Sunil Chandra Verma⁴ Mona Sharma⁵
Suraj Pandey⁶

¹Reader, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

²Reader, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

³Professor and Head, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

⁴Reader, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

⁵Professor, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

⁶Reader, Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

ABSTRACT

Background: Various studies have reported poor awareness and knowledge of dentistry amongst medical professionals. There is, however, paucity of information assessing the knowledge and awareness of medical doctors/students and nurses about dentistry. The present study is aimed at determining the knowledge and awareness of medical doctors about dentistry.

Methods: self-administered questionnaires were randomly distributed among medical practitioners in Lucknow city. Information collected using the questionnaire included participants' biodata, questions evaluating dental awareness, knowledge of systemic and oral health connections as well as referral practices.

Results & Conclusion: Although a large percentage of the participants claimed to be aware of dentistry, our findings revealed low level of knowledge and attitude to Dentistry. Efforts should be made towards closing this knowledge gap to achieve efficient oral health.

Keywords: Dental Health, Oral Health, Medical Professionals, Dental Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Oral cavity is the mirror to general overall health, acting as a early warning or sentinel system. Oral cavity is constantly invaded by multiple microorganisms like parasites, viruses, bacteria, and fungi. Many systemic diseases have oral manifestations. The lesions develop on oral mucosal surface, gingiva, teeth, periodontium, tongue, facial skeleton, salivary glands, extraoral skin and other related structures.²

Therefore, oral cavity plays an important role in diagnosis not just by the virtue of being derived from all the primary germinal layers. Thus oral cavity is an important diagnostic area not just because it contains derivatives of all of the primary

germinal layers, but also because of its role in diagnosing a multitude of systemic diseases based on their oral manifestations.¹ In the Indian scenario many rural population report to the medical professionals for their dental and oral problems due to lack of awareness or unavailability of the dental services in near vicinity.³

Medical doctors should also be trained in basic dental knowledge to diagnose signs and symptoms of dental pathologies in patients, to provide adequate and appropriate treatment or to educate these patients and act as public health educators. Many medical practitioners are also not aware about the specialities of the dentistry which results in the

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*Correspondence Dr. Pranav Kumar Singh.

Department of Periodontics, Babu Banarasi Das College of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, India.

Email: pranav.singh23@gmail.com

improper practices.⁴ The purpose of this study is to investigate and compare oral health knowledge and behaviour among medical professionals in Lucknow city, Uttar Pradesh.

Team of all the health profession have the potential role in promotion of oral health by supporting accurate oral health diagnostic messages, showing ideal behaviors related oral health, participating in explicit oral health promotion programs, and encouraging appropriate dental visit activities within the scope of their duties.⁵ The present study seeks to assess the dental knowledge, attitudes and awareness of medical professionals towards dentistry Lucknow city, Uttar Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional questionnaire survey was carried out to assess the knowledge, attitude and awareness of Medical Practitioners of Lucknow. A simple random sampling was done. Convenient sample size of 300 was decided. These practitioners included those with MBBS degree/MBBS degree along with higher specialization (MD/MS/MCH) and lastly were medical practitioners.

The duration of the study spanned over a period of one month from March 2019 to April 2019. The required permission was obtained from the concerned authorities. A systematically designed questionnaire of 11 close ended questions was made to assess the knowledge, attitude and awareness about oral health.

The medical practitioners were approached personally or telephonically, the purpose of the study was explained along with handing over of the questionnaire. It was also mentioned that responses would remain confidential. The responses were collected by either telephonic interviews or clinics/hospitals/institutions with which they were attached. This approach resulted in the return of 300 questionnaires form, representing 100% response rate.

Sections on which questions were framed-

Section 1- Dental awareness and attitude of medical professionals towards dentistry

Section 2- Respondents awareness about dentistry and dental specialities

Section 3- Respondents knowledge about systemic and oral health

Closed ended questions on dental awareness and attitude of medical students towards dentistry

1. Did you ever visit a dentist? Yes/No
2. If yes, what was the purpose? a. Severe pain in tooth
b. Impaction
c. Correction of irregular teeth
d. Any other
3. Do you know proper brushing techniques? Yes/No
4. How many times do you brush daily? a) Once daily b) Twice daily
5. Do you know the consequences if you ignore the dental problems? a) Yes b) No

Questions and options in section B- Respondents' awareness about dentistry and dental specialties

1. Do you know that there are 9 branches in dentistry? a) Yes b) No
2. Are you aware of etiology of dental caries? a) Yes b) No
3. Do you know about effect of excess intake of fluoride on teeth? a) Yes b) No
4. Do you know that esthetics can be improved by the dentist? a) Yes b) No
5. Do you know that there is specialist for root canal treatment? a) Yes b) No
6. Do you know that there is specialist for irregularly arranged teeth? a) Yes b) No
7. Do you know about preventive dentist? a) Yes b) No
8. Do you know that road traffic accidents cases are treated by the oral surgeons? a) Yes b) No
9. Are you aware of TMJ disorders associated with dental problems? a) Yes b) No
10. Do you know that negligence of untreating dental caries can lead to facial infections? a) Yes b) No

Questions and options in section C- Respondents' knowledge about systemic and oral health

1. Do you know about systemic diseases related to dental problems? a) Yes b) No

2. Do you know about signs and symptoms of medical diseases that are manifested in oral cavity? a) Yes b) No

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Medical professionals could play an important role in oral public health.

They are endowed to have a basic dental knowledge as they do come across various oral problems among patients while practicing such as toothache, swelling in the oral cavity, bleeding gums, various white and red patches if they examine the oral cavity regularly. This condition can be identified at the initial stage. Therefore, smooth interaction is needed between medical and dental team to achieve good health delivery.⁶

The present study is designed to determine dental awareness among medical professionals. Although there has been increase in oral health awareness at large, it seems there has been a shift in attitude and knowledge of people to dentistry.⁵ This is in correspondence to our study that reveals 84% participants had visited a dentist for checkup or treatment. This is completely opposite to seen as in also similar to the study of Bashiru et al. who stated that 71.6% of the 360 studied undergraduate students never visited a dentist before in Southern Nigeria.⁷

However, other studies like Chandra et al reported that 100% of study population had at least one dental visit in last one year. The fear of pain is one of the reason why people would not want to visit a dentist (2, 22, 26).⁸

According to our study out of 130 (44%) physician had gone to private hospital for their treatment, and 243 (81%) physician have referred their patients to dentist for treatment.

Our study also reveals that most of the physicians have a precise knowledge regarding all the speciality treatments of dentistry. And according to our study 270 (90%) physician believe that a medical professional should be aware of various speciality treatment in dentistry and 250 (83%) believe that their patients should also be aware of various speciality of dentistry.

When asked how they think dental awareness should be prompted among medical professionals most of them i.e., 114 (38%) believe that it should be promoted by organizing conference regarding dental awareness.

But, this information is still unacceptable and reveals a lack of basic dental knowledge among medical health workers. This was also reported by many previous researchers.^{9,10,11,12} This is mainly attributed to minimal or no exposure to dental education during the course of their training. Therefore, it can be said that incorporating dental education into medical curriculum will probably improve dental knowledge and skills among medical practitioners as suggested by many previous studies.^{10,12,13,14}

Oral health is an integral part of systemic health. Therefore, adequate level of understanding and cooperation is needed between medical and dental health team to ensure qualitative health care delivery.

CONCLUSION

Coordination between medical professionals and dentist is one of the major reasons to refer the patients about the ailment which are surfacing and are in the initial stages of dental hazards. A rapport between medical profession and dentist can nip in the bud which patient may suffer in the long run.

Although medical professionals are aware of ground realities pertaining to dental disorders their lackluster approach is the major reason for health coordination between medical professionals and dentist.

This can be resolved by inviting dentist and vice versa medical professional in all conferences and seminars.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare they have no potential conflict of interests regarding this article.

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