

Oral Health Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Patients Visiting a Private Hospital in Chennai

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Abstract:

Aim: To assess the oral health knowledge, attitudes and practices of the patients of a private hospital.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire incorporating items related to oral health knowledge, attitudes, and practices was distributed to 150 patients visiting the hospital.

Results: Only 100 completely filled questionnaires were statistically analyzed. The study population consisted of 44% males and 56% females. The females consult the dentist immediately when they experience pain in tooth, tooth decay, or bleeding of gums. More than 50% of males and females are aware of the cause and prevention of decay, gum disease and malocclusion. 46.1% males and 4% females have the habit of smoking and are not aware of the adverse effects. Majority of the patients use soft bristles for brushing and less than 50% females use fluoridated toothpaste.

Conclusion: Oral health knowledge, attitude, and practices are found to be satisfactory, but still dental health education may be imparted.

Keywords: Oral health, knowledge, attitude, practice.

I. Introduction

Oral health habits are measures people learn and practice regularly in order to maintain good oral health or prevent oral disease. The most common oral diseases, dental caries and periodontal disease, are considered to be behavioural diseases because adoption of healthy oral habits is crucial in controlling them. To a great extent, their prevention and control depend on a person's lifestyle and behaviour.

Individuals become aware of anything new by showing interest in knowing more about it and evaluating advantages and disadvantages, to put that new idea or methods in practice. Finally the individual accepts the ideas as beneficial to him by practicing it in principle. Awareness alone is not enough to achieve good oral health unless the target population practices it ideally. Although imparting oral health education begins from the footsteps of awareness, evaluation of its implementation is an important indicator of the success of the education imparted. [1]

The information gathered from a private hospital serving across a multicultural area of Chennai and servicing patients across various socio economic groups would be vital in providing information regarding the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding public health. Such information would be valuable in formulating dental screening programs aimed at decreasing the incidence and prevention of dental issues in general population.

II. Material And Methods

The study was conducted on patients attending a hospital located in North Chennai. The population attending the hospital was evenly spread across the upper, middle and lower socio economic groups. The educational status of the population stretched from less than Vth standard pass to post graduates. People who could read and understand the questions were studied with their consent.

The study was conducted after obtaining clearance from the scientific research board of Saveetha University, Chennai. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the study. A self-assessed questionnaire was formulated to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices on oral health. The questions were pre tested to assess its reliability. It was distributed to 150 patients of a private hospital while waiting in the waiting room. Completely filled questionnaires were taken for analysis.

III. Results

Figure 1 shows gender wise assessment of knowledge among the study population. 82% of males and 78.4% of females are aware that oral health has an impact on general health. 66.6% of males know about the total number of teeth in primary dentition and 76.7% male are aware of the total number of teeth in secondary dentition. 70.5% of the female population seem to know about total number of primary dentition and 78.4% about secondary dentition. 84.6% of males and 94.1% females consider that brushing twice prevents dental caries. Among the study participants it shows that 74.3% of males and 84.3% of females are aware that microorganisms cause tooth decay. Around 71.7% of males and 78.4% of females are aware that irregular brushing causing bleeding gums. 79.5% of males and 70.5% of females agree that adverse oral habits causes mal occlusion.

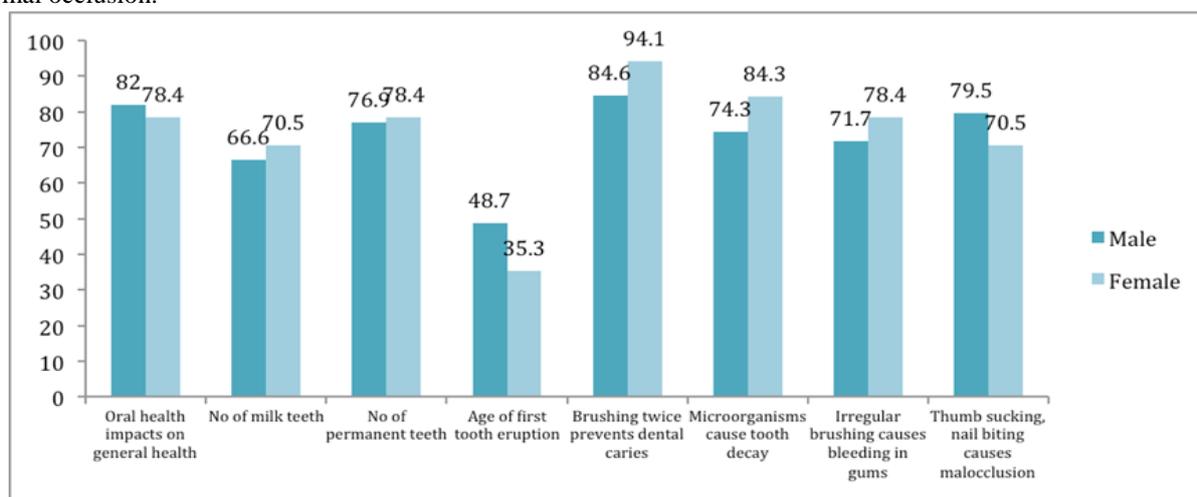


Figure 2 illustrates assessment of attitude among the study population according to sex. 51.2% males and 70.6% females recommend regular visit to the dentist. 79.5% of males and 94.3% of females would consult the dentist for pain in tooth. 56.4% of males and 45% of females are aware that restoration is important. In the study population around 66.6% males and 80.3% females visit the dentists when they notice bleeding in gums. 82% of males and 74.5% of females visit the dentist for tooth decay. Around 94.8% of males give a lot of importance to oral health awareness compared to the females who are at 86.3%. 97.4% of males and 92.1% of females are aware of the importance of natural teeth. 79.4% of males and 72.4% of females are satisfied with their oral hygiene. In the entire study population, only 25.6% of males and 37.3% of females consider that artificial teeth is effective.

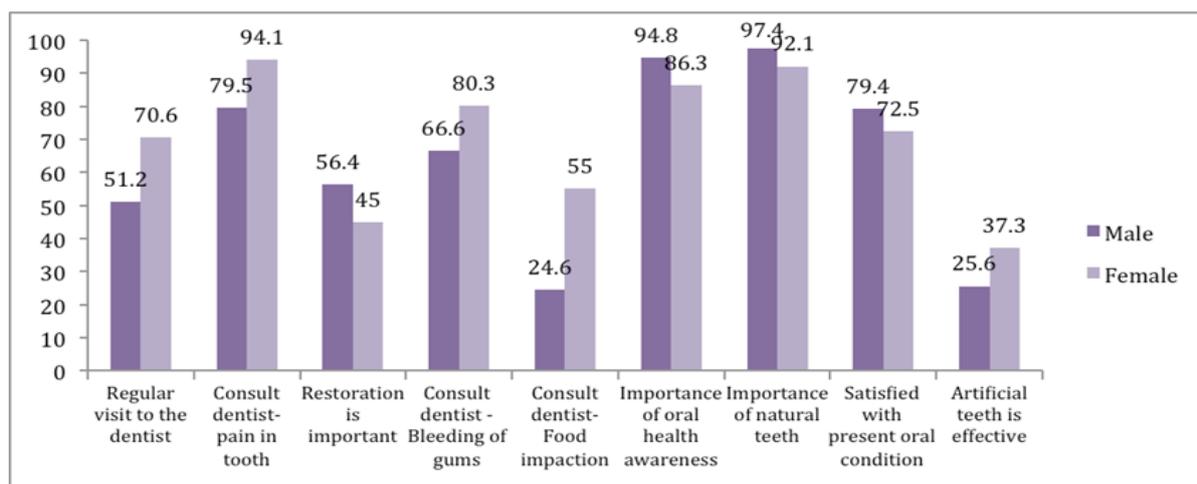


Figure 3 highlights the assessment of practice among the study population according to sex. 38.4% males and 24.5% of females visit the dentist every 6 months. 66.6% of males and females use soft bristled toothbrush for brushing. In the study population, 33.3% of males and 43.1% of females used fluoridated toothpaste for brushing. Around 46.1% of males have the habit of smoking more than 4% of female participants. 51.2% of males and 58.8% of females have the habit of brushing for 3 minutes. It was observed that 30.7% of males and 39.2% of females rinse their mouth after every meal. 30.7% of males and 54.9% of females seem to change their toothbrush every 3 months.

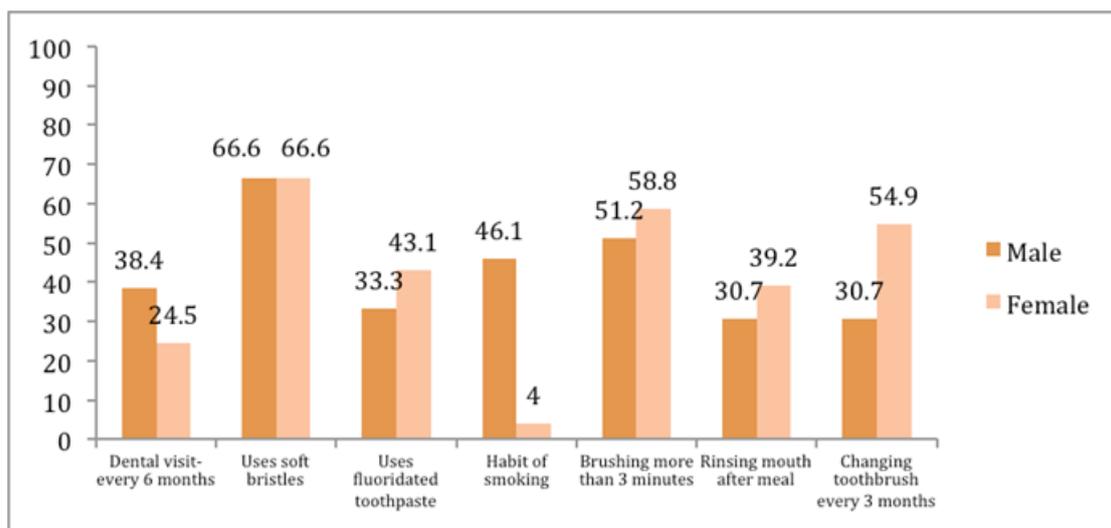


Fig3: Genderwise assessment of practice

IV. Discussion

Response to questions on oral health knowledge

While assessing the knowledge of the patients, 66.6% males and 70.5% females were aware of the total number of primary teeth and more than 50% of males and females were aware of the total number of permanent teeth. This is in contrast to the study conducted by NagarajaRao and Bhat Mohandas 1977 on patients visiting a dental college in Bangalore, where 23.33% and 77.34% were aware of the number of primary and secondary teeth respectively [2]. It was also in contrast to the study done by Pradeep Kumar et al among patients visiting a private dental hospital, Chennai, where only 18.3% of males and 33.6% of females were aware about the number of milk teeth [1]. In similarity to the present study, more than 50% of the population were aware of the permanent teeth.

In this study more than 50% of the males and females of all age groups were aware of cause and prevention of decay, gum disease and malocclusion. Similarly in the study done by Pradeep Kumar et al, more than 50% of the patients were aware of the cause of prevention of decay, gum disease and malocclusion [1]. The results show similarity with a study conducted by H.C.Lin et al on Southern Chinese adults in 2001 showed that majority of them identified tooth decay due to sugar or sweet food [3]

In the present study more than 75% of the patients were aware that regular brushing will prevent gum disease which is in an agreement to a study done by Quteishaani (2002) and Paik DI et al(1994) [4,5]. In his study with Jordanian adults, it was found that 60.8% of the adults were aware that proper tooth brushing could prevent bleeding of gums.

Majority of the respondents in this study were aware of the cause and prevention of malocclusion. 80% of the participants are also aware that oral health has an impact on general health.

Response to questions on oral health attitude

In this study dental pain is the major reason for the patients to visit the dentist. Around 86% of the entire study population visits the dentist immediately during pain in tooth. Similarly more than 50% of the patients in the study done by Pradeep Kumar et al (2009) visit the dentist immediately during pain in tooth [1]. This is comparatively more than the study done by Ling Zhu (2005) et al on Chinese adults, which showed that only 23% adults consider toothache to be a major reason to visit the dentist [6].

The assessment of attitude toward oral health amongst the targeted population of this study reveal that 70.6% of female and 51.2% of males were aware of the importance of regular visits to the dentist. A study done, with the Amish population by Robert. A Bagramian(1998) in southwest Michigan revealed that only 46% had regular dental check ups [7].

Almost 95% of the present study consider natural teeth important which is similar to the finding by Ling Zhu (2005) et al on Chinese adults [6]. In a study done by Pradeep Kumar et al more than 95% of the patients think natural teeth is important in which is similar to the present study [1]. A majority of the population (69%) said that artificial teeth is not effective which is similar to the study by Ling Zhu (2005) et al in which 84% of the population disagrees false teeth will be less of a bother than natural teeth [6].

Response to questions on oral hygiene practice

In this study population, 38.2% of them were aware of fluoridated toothpaste. In a previous study done by Ling Zhu and Peterson P.Ein (2003) reported that 17% adolescents used fluoridated toothpaste in china and in another study done by the same author reported that 56% of Luthiana are unaware of fluoride [8]. In a study done by Pradeep Kumar et al had 49% of patients using fluoridated toothpaste in Chennai [1].

In this study, 66.6% of the population use soft type of bristles for brushing. This result in comparison to a study conducted by Ling Zhu and Paul Erik Petersen (2003) where the children are the one using soft bristles and the adults prefer to use medium and hard bristles [8].

Only 40% of the population changed their toothbrush every 3 months. This indicates that the present study population should be encouraged to change their toothbrush every 3 months.

In this present study 30.7% males and 39.2% females have the habit of rinsing their mouth after every meal. In contrast to Lin et al 2001 in a study on southern Chinese adults found only 17% of the population had the habit of rinsing mouth after every meal [3]. The present study is in contrast to a study done by Pradeep Kumar et al where 74% of both male and female rinse their mouth after every meal.

V. Conclusion

The study reveals that the patients have an adequate knowledge about oral health. In general the females were more aware and had a better knowledge about dental health issues and more engaged in dental behaviour than the male patients. The attitude of the patients about visiting the dentist and available dental treatments should be improved. This can be achieved by imparting knowledge with a positive attitude about dental treatments. Frequent oral health awareness programs must be conducted and dental health education should be imparted to children in schools so that they are exposed to the various dental issues and treatments at an early stage. It can thus be concluded that having a good knowledge, positive attitude, and a sound practice of healthful reduce the burden of disease in a developing country like India.

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