



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ORAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE OF PARENTS TOWARDS ROOT CANAL TREATMENT OF PRIMARY TEETH IN MANGALORE A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Dental caries is one among the major health problem affecting 60 to 90% of school children. Early and timely intervention is required to prevent the occurrence of dental caries. It is important that primary dentition is maintained in the dental arch provided it can be restored to function and remain free from disease. The purpose of this study is to explore the dental health knowledge, awareness and attitude of patient's parents towards pulp therapy of primary teeth.

**Aim:** to access dental health knowledge, awareness and attitude of patients parents towards pulp therapy of primary teeth.

**Material and Methods:** it's a time bound study which would be conducted for a period of 3 months. The study will be conducted in department of pedodontics and preventive dentistry ajids Mangalore. All the parents of child patients requiring pulp treatment procedure visiting the dental opd over this time period will be personally interviewed with a questionnaire. Their response will be computed and the results will be statistically analysed.

**Results:** in this study pain was the prime reason for the population (59.7%) to make their 1<sup>st</sup> dental visit. Parents felt the need to save the pulpally involved primary teeth and there was willingness to save the pulpally involved primary teeth 95.5%, very less 4.5% felt it was not required to save the primary teeth as it will be replaced by permanent successors.

**Conclusion:** a norm of regular semi-annual/annual dental check-up has to be set up as the parents get there child to dental clinic when the disease is advanced, hence we need to create awareness among the population about the significance of maintaining a healthy primary dentition.

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INTRODUCTION

Dental caries is a major oral health problem in most industrialised countries, affecting 60–90% of schoolchildren and the vast majority of adults. If not managed properly may lead to teeth loss. In children caries progresses quickly, while inducing pain with accompanied discomfort and sleep disorder (Arora, Scott, Bhole, Schwarz, and Blinkhorn, 2011) and decreases quality of life in children (Ahn, Lee, and Ryu, 2006; Tickle et al., 2011). Moreover, it acts as causing lesion which induces inflammation in dental tissues and other nearby tissues. As a result, children's dental caries becomes the most common cause for tooth extraction. In addition to this, when primary tooth is lost early due to dental caries, it may become cause for malocclusion (Kim et al., 2009). That is why effort in prevention and management of children's dental caries should be prioritized more than in other oral diseases.

Young children's dental environment is complex as parental knowledge, attitudes and beliefs affect the child's oral health (Woosung et al., 2008; Kumar, 1993). As parents are the primary caregivers of their children they should have knowledge about the primary teeth, its health and caring in order to build confidence in their children (Nagaveni et al., 2011). Parents are decision makers for their children. Sarnat et al reported that at the age of 5–6 years, the more positive the mother's attitude toward dental health the better is the child's oral hygiene. Therefore, it is important to examine the attitudes and also the knowledge of the parents, as these may affect their behavior toward their child's oral health (Sarnat et al., 1984). Many a time, parents consider that the primary teeth are not important as they will fall out and replaced by permanent teeth, so it is not worth their while to spend time/money on providing oral health to children Even in developed nations, most parents still take their child to the dentist for curative and not for preventive treatment. It is important that primary dentition should be maintained in the dental arch as it guides the permanent teeth to erupt in correct position. An intact tooth successfully disinfected and restored clinically is superior

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space maintainer than an appliance (Setty JV, Srinivasan I); taking this into consideration the present study was designed and to assess the dental health knowledge, awareness and attitude of parents towards pulp therapy of primary teeth.”

### Aim and Objectives

The awareness of population about the dental problem of children, reasons for visiting a dentist, and their attitude toward the treatment of pulpally involved primary teeth

### Source of Data

Study was conducted in the outpatient department of Pedodontics and preventive dentistry AJIDS Mangalore over a period of three months. Child patient requiring pulpal treatment were only included in the study.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study was conducted in the outpatient department of Pedodontics and preventive dentistry AJIDS Mangalore for a period of 3 months. It was a time bound study with a set of questions with multiple choice answers were formulated. This questionnaire were personally given to the parents of the child patients requiring pulp therapy for primary teeth. The respondents were asked to tick the most appropriate answer. The nature and purpose of the study was explained, its voluntary nature was emphasized and strict confidentiality was assured. Once the questionnaire was answered, it was immediately entered in the computer. Responses obtained were tabulated and the results of the questionnaires were expressed as frequency distributions and computed in percentages. The importance of primary teeth and need for pulp therapy was explained.

## RESULTS

A total of 68 subjects were surveyed to ascertain the knowledge and also the attitude of parents regarding pulp therapy of primary teeth over a period of 3 months. Questionnaires were given only to the parents of the patients who visited the hospital seeking dental treatment of their children with various pulpal conditions requiring pulp treatment procedures. The data thus collected were analysed. The comparisons were done by tests of proportion frequency distribution were plotted and the data is represented in the pie chart and bar graphs. In the conducted study 72.7% patient had visited a dentist before and the commonest reason was pain 59.9%, Only 17.9% had gone for routine dental check-up.

When parents were questioned what they felt was the right time to take their child to dentist, 22.4% felt when the first tooth erupts and 14.9% felt when there is discolouration, whereas the majority 52.2% felt only if the child complains of pain should be taken to the dentist. 54.5% did not prefer taking their child to dentist if they did not complain of pain. Hence it can be concluded that pain is the most common reason for what the parents prefer to take their child to a dentist. When parents were questioned as to whether they feel the need for any dental treatment to save the pulpally involved primary tooth, 86.6% parents preferred filling, whereas 4.5% wanted to get the tooth removed, 7.5% preferred leaving it as it is as these teeth any way shed and are replaced by permanent successors. The willingness to subject their children to undergo

pulp therapy (pulpotomy/pulpectomy) to save the tooth was 85.1%.

The commonest reason for their unwillingness was considering the treatment a waste of time as any way the teeth get replaced by permanent teeth.

Table 1. Questionnaire

<b>Has your child ever visited a dental clinic /dentist?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>If yes, Reason to visit a dental clinic?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Discoloured teeth</li> <li>• Routine dental check up</li> <li>• Appearance / aesthetics</li> </ul>
<b>What do you think is the right time for your child to visit a dentist?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As soon as the first teeth erupts</li> <li>• When there is discolouration</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
<b>In case your child doesn't have a toothache do you take your child to the dentist?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Is your child afraid of dental treatment?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Do you think your child has problem with his /her teeth?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Do you think treatment of milk teeth is required?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Do you think decay in primary teeth affects the permanent teeth?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Do you think tooth brushing prevents tooth decay/bleeding gum?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>How many times in a day your child should brush his/her teeth?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once a day</li> <li>• Twice a day</li> <li>• After every meal</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul>
<b>What kind of tooth brush does your child use?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard</li> <li>• Soft</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Do not know</li> </ul>
<b>What do you use to clean your child's teeth?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tooth paste</li> <li>• Tooth powder</li> <li>• Neem twigs</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>
<b>Do you think healthy diet protects teeth and gum?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>If your child had decay in a baby teeth what treatment would you prefer?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filling</li> <li>• Leave as it is</li> <li>• Get the teeth removed</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
<b>If bad tooth can be saved are you willing to undergo root canal treatment?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>If no, Reason for not willing for treatment?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Economy</li> <li>• Feel not necessary as it's a milk teeth and will fall off.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

Maintaining healthy primary teeth is essential to a child's overall oral and general development (Casamassimo, 2005). Parents and family members are considered the primary source for knowledge about child rearing and health habits for children, which undoubtedly have a long-term influence in determining a child's oral health status (Watt, 2002; Mathewson *et al.*, 1995). They are considered the key persons in achieving the best oral health outcomes and assuring well-being for children. In pediatric dental practice we find parents are ignorant about the primary tooth, its function and importance. Parents are often seen to be in dilemma whether to get the primary teeth treated or to leave it untreated. There is no good reason for leaving primary teeth decayed and untreated in a child's mouth (Curzon, 1997). Untreated carious primary tooth can give rise to different complications, such as pain, oral infection, problems in eating and sleeping, malnutrition and alterations in growth and development (Clarke *et al.*, 2006; Schroth *et al.*, 2009; Schroth *et al.*, 2012; Schroth *et al.*, 2013) and probably early loss of teeth, which might lead to short-term effects like problems in eating and speaking and long term effects like malalignment of permanent teeth and increased risk of malocclusion later on (Kagihara *et al.*, 2009). In our study it was seen that pain was the common reason for the parents for seeking dental treatment for their children. Which was in accordance with study conducted by Shetty JV, Srinivasan in which they have seen urban populations seeking dental treatment are more in number as compared to the rural population. Pain and associated feature was the most common reason among both urban (71.92%) and rural (93.3%) patients visiting a dental office (Awareness and attitude of patients' parents toward pulp therapy of the primary teeth: A clinical survey). When parents were assessed for their awareness, knowledge of maintaining a healthy primary dentition most of the parents had adequate knowledge regarding the oral health of the child, whereas in a study done by Jyothsna Vittoba Setty, Ila Srinivasan revealed that the parents had superficial or partial knowledge of primary teeth and that there is a need to improve this awareness<sup>19</sup> where as in our study in spite of having knowledge, awareness and positive attitude towards dental treatment they failed to get their kids treated at an early stage and only reported when the disease was considerably progressed causing pulpal involvement, so no correlation was found between the attitude of the parent and dental health of the child. Which was in accordance with study conducted by Haim Sarnat were they could not find a direct correlation between attitude and behaviour of the parent and oral health of child (Sarnat *et al.*, 1984). Other studies suggest that mothers involvement in the dental health program is effective in reinforcing dental health enhancing behavior in elementary school children (Choi, Hye Seon · Ahn, Hye Young)

## Conclusion

Awareness programs should be developed for parents imparting knowledge about primary teeth, their function and preventive primary care of these teeth. To achieve this, young and prospective parents should be directed by the medical professionals, obstetricians, gynaecologists and paediatricians to seek professional oral health counseling. A norm of a regular annual/semi-annual dental check-up routine has to be set. It is important to inform the parents that the child must undergo a dental examination by the time the first tooth

appears in the oral cavity and then follow a regular routine dental check-up which saves the child and the parent a lot of trouble. Unfortunately, one gets to see the child when the disease progress has reached the stage where either function or aesthetics or both are compromised. One of the reasons for timely intervention not happening could be that some children seldom complain of pain while these lesions are progressing. We, as professionals, need to create more awareness among the populace of our country about the significance of maintaining a healthy primary dentition and attendant sequelae of not doing so. Both general dentists and paediatric dentists must play a proactive role in this process and contribute in either way possible.

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