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Original Research Paper

Assessment of Oral Hygiene Attitudes, Behaviour and Knowledge of Undergraduate Dental Students of Rama Dental College, Kanpur City

Dental Science

KEYWORDS : oral hygiene, behaviour, students

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of the present study was to assess the oral hygiene attitudes, behaviours and practices of the undergraduate students in Rama dental college.

Material and Method: A descriptive cross sectional study was been conducted. A self-structured, pre- tested questionnaire was used in the study for assessing the oral hygiene behaviour, knowledge and attitudes. The questionnaire consisted details regarding the various socio demographic details, questions regarding brushing, importance of oral health etc

Results: The results revealed that the all the undergraduate students had 100% knowledge regarding the number of teeth present in the permanent dentition, whilst regarding the importance of visiting a dentist, a higher percentage of 95% was found amongst the interns.

Conclusion: As from the current study, the knowledge of the undergraduate dental students was found to be satisfactory. Hence, a comprehensive program regarding oral hygiene must be implemented, starting from their first year of education.

Introduction

The behaviour of oral health providers and their attitudes towards their oral health could affect their capacity to deliver oral health care and thus might affect the oral health of their patients.1,2, 3 Dental health providers need to set an example for their patients by maintaining good oral health in their own mouths. Through their undergraduate study, it is logical for students in the field of dentistry to develop and modify their attitudes/behaviour towards their own oral health. This in turn could affect the oral health of the patients.4 Oral health attitudes and behaviour are influenced by parents in early years of life and also predict the actual oral health status.5,6 Dental students are the future providers of dental care and are expected to be a role model for their patients, family members and friends and ensure their awareness of oral health maintenance.7 In India, the undergraduate dental program includes four years of education followed by one year of compulsory, rotating internship. However, clinical practice starts in the third year of study. Therefore, differences are expected in the attitudes of the students, right from the first year until the internship, towards various oral health care practices and their knowledge. In addition, it is a known fact that the males and females differ in their perception about similar situations.8, 9

Attitudes of dental students toward their own oral health affect their oral health habits and have possible influence on the improvement of the oral health of their patients.10, 11, 12 There is no standard method mentioned in literature which can be used to assess oral health attitudes.

Researchers found oral attitudes and behaviour among dental students to be different among pre-clinical and clinical years. Furthermore, oral health attitudes and behaviour among dental students were found to vary in different countries and different cultures.13,14 Since males and females have different physiological and psychological behaviours, it is possible their oral health behaviour might be different as well. Researchers have found females to engage in better oral hygiene behavioural measures, possess a great interest in oral health, and perceive their own oral health to be good to a higher degree than do males.15 According to various studies, it was found that the female university students have better habits in terms of tooth brushing than male students do.16, 17 Others studies also revealed that the females visited their dentists and brushed their teeth more often than males do.18, 19 , 20

The purpose of the present study was to explore the dental health attitudes and behaviour of

Indian dental students based on dental education, age, and sex. These data may help in assessing and comparing the focus of the curriculum, so to decide whether dental students should be introduced more towards philosophy and practice of preventive dentistry.

Materials and methods

Study design: A descriptive cross sectional study was been conducted. A self-structured, pre- tested questionnaire was used in the study for assessing the oral hygiene behaviour, knowledge and attitudes. The questionnaire consisted of 20 close-ended questions, which included questions on brushing, flossing, types of dentition etc. The validity of the questionnaire was also checked.

Sampling method & sample size: A convenience sample size was undertaken to select the target population. The sample size selected was 500 students from first year to final year and internship. 100 students were taken from each year of BDS.

Inclusion & Exclusion criteria:

The inclusion criterion for the study was all the students willing to participate in the study and all students from all the years of BDS.

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The exclusion criterion included students not willing to participate in the study and students who were absent on the day of the study.

Pilot study and Pre-testing of the questionnaire: Pilot study was conducted amongst 60 students in order to determine the feasibility of the study and to get acquainted to it. Depending upon the answers given from the questionnaires which were been administered, the data was analysed and Cronbach's coefficient was calculated, which was found to be 0.78.

Approval from authorities and ethical consideration: The permission was obtained from the Institutional review board of Rama Dental College, Hospital & Research Centre.

Data collection and analysis: The data was collected by using a pre- tested, self-structured; close- ended questionnaire consisting of 20 questions (7 each for knowledge, 6 for attitude and7 for practice) taken on a nominal scale were administered to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding oral hygiene to the targeted population. The questionnaire consisted details regarding the various socio demographic details, questions regarding brushing, importance of oral health etc. In case of any queries regarding the questionnaire, the students were told to contact the investigator. The study period was between August 2015 to October 2015. The data was collected, compiled and then percentage was calculated.

Results

Table 1 shows the percentage of various students regarding the oral health knowledge

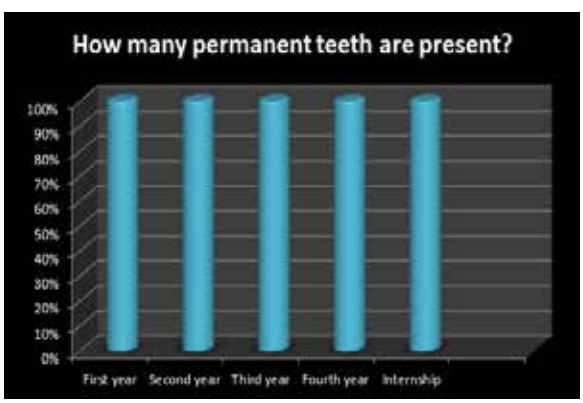


Table 2 shows the percentage of various students regarding the oral health attitudes on the question 'Is Dental treatment expensive?'

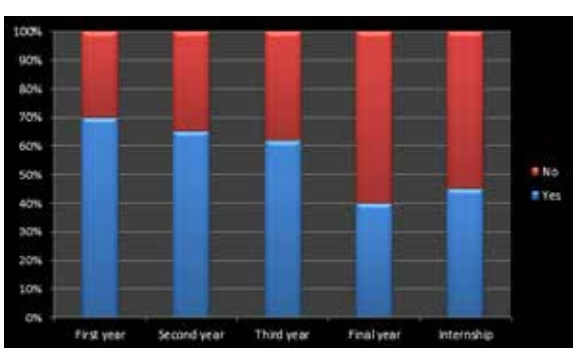
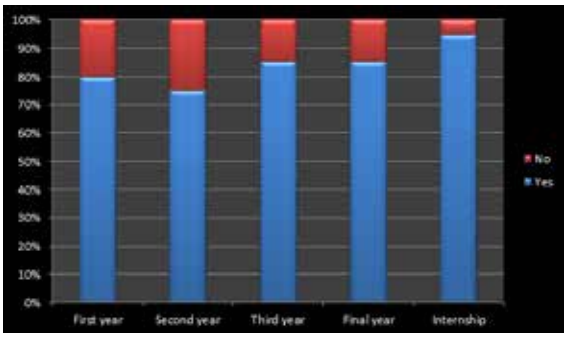


Table 3 shows the percentage of various students regarding the oral health attitudes on the question 'Do you think that visiting a dentist is important?'



Discussion

In this present study, it was seen that the knowledge, attitude and practices of undergraduate students was found to be satisfactory. Although, all the undergraduate dental students including the interns had 100% knowledge regarding 'how many permanent teeth were present?'.There was a study done in Kanpur city on dental and medical students where it was found that the dental students had better knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding ' permanent teeth, frequency of brushing, number of dental visits, importance of oral health and overall health, bleeding gums and gum diseases.21

It was found in the current study that first year undergraduate students (70%) believed that the dental treatment is expensive and the frequency of scores were decreased from second year to internship i.e. 65%, 62%, 40% and 45% respectively, when actually students started their clinics and believed the fact regarding the cost of dental treatments. Various studies also revealed that dental undergraduate students when started their clinical curriculum believed that dental treatments were not expensive and for a better oral health, treatments are very important.22, 23, 24

The current undertaken study revealed that the percentage regarding the importance of visiting a dentist was found to be highest in internship students (95%) and lowest in second year students (75%). Another study was conducted amongst medical students in Karad and it was found that only 60% students had believed that visiting a dentist is important.25 Knowledge regarding bleeding of gums and gum diseases was also found to be 50% amongst first year and second year students whilst final year and interns were having more knowledge i.e. 65% and 80%. Another study, similar to the present study was conducted in Iringa where knowledge regarding bleeding of gums and gum diseases was found to be very low.26

Therefore, the knowledge, attitudes and practices among dental undergraduate students was found to be satisfactory. However, efficient measures must be taken in order to increase the knowledge and awareness regarding oral health.

Conclusion and recommendations

The current study aimed at assessing the oral hygiene attitudes and knowledge of undergraduate dental students. The results showed that dental students in Kanpur still need to improve their oral health behaviours in order to serve as a positive model for their patients, families, and friends. More emphasis should be placed on the courses that teach the students how to improve their oral health. Further research is needed to clinically assess the oral health of the students.

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