



PREVALENCE OF MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING ORAL HEALTH IN DELHI NCR REGION.

Dental Science

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ABSTRACT

Objectives; To check the prevalence of social myths and taboos related to oral health among general population of Delhi NCR region.

Research methods; It was a descriptive cross sectional study conducted at dental OPD of Faculty of Dentistry, Jamia Millia Islamia. Misconceptions and taboos regarding oral health were explored by giving a questionnaire to 150 respondents from adult community and different parameters were statistically analysed.

Results; After complete statistical analysis, it was concluded that large population has myths and misconceptions regarding oral health. People had misconceptions about primary teeth and permanent dentition, spread of cancer, diarrhoea at the time of teething, loss of vision by extraction of maxillary teeth.

Conclusion; Myths and misconceptions associated with oral hygiene were significantly higher in uneducated class. Many of these myths and beliefs are due to illiteracy and lack of knowledge.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION;

Health continues to be a neglected entity despite continuous efforts for health promotion, worldwide. Oral health is an integral part of general health and factors such as diet, oral hygiene practices, literacy, socio-economic status, etc., influence oral health to a great extent¹. Poor oral health resulting from untreated dental ailments can have a significant impact on the quality of life which may lead to deterioration of general health²

Myth originates from "mythos" a Greek word meaning speech, thought or story of unknown origin. It is a traditional story usually concerning some being, hero or event with or without a determinable basis, facts or a natural explanation³. Taboo comes from a Tongan word "tabu", means set apart or forbidden. No taboo is known to be universal but some occur in majority of societies. Taboos may serve many functions and often in effect after original reason behind them has expired.

METHODOLOGY;

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in the faculty of dentistry, Jamia Millia Islamia. Sample consisted of 150 respondents from adult community.

All the participants were informed and briefed regarding study and permission was obtained before data collection. Identity of the participants has been kept confidential. Informed written and verbal consents were taken from the participants of the study after explaining them the purpose of the study.

RESULTS;

The purpose of the study was to find out various myths prevalent among the general population of Delhi visiting to Faculty of Dentistry Jamia Millia Islamia. It is seen that most of the people strongly believe in myths and taboos relating to dental and oral health and have misconceptions about it.

The tool used to observe various myths was a questionnaire, comprising of written questions with yes, no, don't know as answers. Out of 150 participants 98 were male 52 were female. Among the respondents 96 were below high school, 40 were graduates and 4 were post graduates and above. Myths were most common among the respondents below high school level, reason being their low education level.

Questionnaire

1. Extraction of maxillary tooth affects vision.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

60% of the respondents believed extraction affects vision, 34% said no and 6% said don't know.

2. Getting treatment done by dentist will lead to jaundice.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

88% did not believe in this. 4% said yes, and 8% had no idea.

3. Space between central incisors is an indication of good health.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

70% of the respondents believed it to be myth but 21% believed it to be true and 9% said they don't know.

4. Extraction of one tooth deteriorates the whole dentition.

1. yes 2.No. 3..Dont know

72 of the respondent said no, but 22% said yes and 6% had no idea.

5. Teething in young children results in diarrhea and fever.

1. yes 2.no. 3..dont know

82% of the respondents said yes whereas 16% said no 2% had no idea.

6. Teeth should be buried after extraction

1. yes 2.No. 3 Dont know

92% of the respondents said no. 4% said yes

7. Tooth decays because of worms

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

52% of the respondents said yes whereas 44% said no, and 4% said they had no idea.

8. Wisdom teeth is related to human intelligence.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

82% said yes, 14% said no, 4% said don't know.

9. Milk teeth if diseased need no treatment as they will be replaced by permanent teeth.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

74% said yes whereas 20% said no and 6% had no idea.

10. Only treatment of carious teeth is extraction.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

80% said no whereas 16% said yes. 4% had no idea.

11. After fall of permanent teeth, new teeth occurs in few individuals.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

15% said yes, 80% no 5% had no idea.

12. Metal leads to spread of cancer.

1. yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

22% of the respondent said yes, 78% said no

13. Do you think Oral prophylaxis causes loosening of teeth.

1. Yes 2.No. 3.Dont know

30% of the respondent said yes, 66% said no, 4% had no idea.

Discussion;

Results of the study conclude lack of knowledge about dental health in this study 60% of the respondents believed extraction affects vision.

This is a myth. In earlier days because of lack of medical facility, as age increased teeth were extracted also their eyesight became weak. There is no scientific basis which proves any link between eyes and maxillary teeth. Majority of the participants thought that decaying of teeth is a hereditary process, and more of less educated participants believed in this myth. This shows that their knowledge and awareness regarding oral health is poor and is associated with their literacy level that predisposes them to false belief. In the present study 74% believed that milk tooth if gets diseased do not require treatment as permanent teeth eventually replaces them. No matter how poor the condition of the teeth, the parents try to avoid dentist and try different home remedies.

82% of the respondents believed in myths that teething in young children results in GIT problems and diarrhoea. There was no relation of fever and diarrhoea with teething. Scientific study provides no evidence to it when the teething process starts, the child is in crawling stage and contaminates his hands and takes the same contaminated hands to the mouth repeatedly, this leads to infection and diarrhoea.

Surprisingly, 52% of the respondents said yes when asked tooth is decayed by worms. Tooth is decayed by acid producing microorganisms and not worms. This can be because from olden days, health professionals have been stressing on avoiding chocolates [a sticky sweet] rather than educating them that dental caries belongs to the group of common diseases considered as "complex" or "multifactorial".⁶

Conclusion;

Myths and misconceptions associated with dental and oral hygiene were significantly higher in uneducated class. May be these myths and beliefs are due to illiteracy and lack of knowledge and they act as barriers for utilization of dental services. As level of education is increasing myths are reducing, still lot of work is to be done to make people aware of the reality.

Conflict of interest ; NIL

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