



## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND SKILLS OF GENERAL DENTAL PRACTITIONERS REGARDING PEDIATRIC DENTAL PRACTICES IN PUDUCHERRY - A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY.

### Dentistry

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### ABSTRACT

**Context:** Pediatric dentistry is a branch of dentistry which plays an important role in treating primary teeth and providing oral health care needs for children. Addressing oral health diseases like early childhood caries (ECC), abnormal oral habits, etc., at primary level is of great need in young children which will prevent future problems. General dentists also share an equal responsibility toward early screening, educating parents, and treating and referring the patient to the pediatric dentist whenever required, which is often neglected due to various issues like behaviour of the child in dental clinics and less training in undergraduation. **Aim:** The aim of this study is to determine the knowledge, attitude, and skills among general dentists and specialist dentist in Puducherry, India, toward various treatment modalities in the pediatric dentistry. **Settings & Design:** The study was conducted among general dental practitioner and specialist dentist in Puducherry. After obtaining consent from the study participants, a prevalidated questionnaire was distributed and collected from them regarding their knowledge, attitude, and skills towards pediatric dental practices. Statistical Analysis Used: Percentage. **Results:** Out of the 73.5 % of the respondents, 64% of respondents were female, 36% were male. About 64.7% of general dental practitioners perform behaviour management for children, Only 50.6% of the respondents were confident in performing endodontic procedures in children. **Conclusion:** General dentists and specialist dentist in Puducherry have got good knowledge toward in pediatric dental practices. The attitude is highly commendable. But most of them felt less training in their undergraduation in treating patients is the barrier for them in diagnosing and treating children.

### KEYWORDS

General Dental practitioners, Pediatric Dentistry, Behaviour management, preventive dentistry.

### INTRODUCTION:

Pediatric dentistry is the branch of dentistry that deals with children and adolescents, which is considered to be the most needed, yet neglected area of all the services performed by dental surgeon. Every dentist must deliver the highest quality of treatment to individual pediatric patients and apply advances in science and technology to continually improve oral health. Consequently, clinical reference must be balanced with the clinician's professional proficiency and the patient's preference.<sup>[1]</sup>

From the literature, it is evident that the General Dental practitioners seem to be less interventionist in their investigation and treatment planning and many time, the treatment done remains incomplete either due to the lack of knowledge of the dentist or due to non co-operation of the child and/parents.<sup>[2]</sup> To execute a successful preventive practice, there is a need of a better understanding of practice pattern, which will help in targeting the continuing education by professional or change in curriculum. For this vision to become a reality, many more dental professionals will need to be aware of and skilled in the treatment methods advocated by AAPD.<sup>[3]</sup>

According to the literature search, few studies have been conducted in abroad<sup>[4,5,6]</sup> and in different parts of India<sup>[7,8,9,10,11]</sup> to assess the knowledge and attitudes of general dentists and specialist dentists of other specialties towards pediatric dental practices, however there are no studies conducted in Puducherry. Hence this survey was planned to assess the knowledge, attitude and skills of general dentists and specialist dentists of other specialties towards pediatric dental practices in Puducherry.

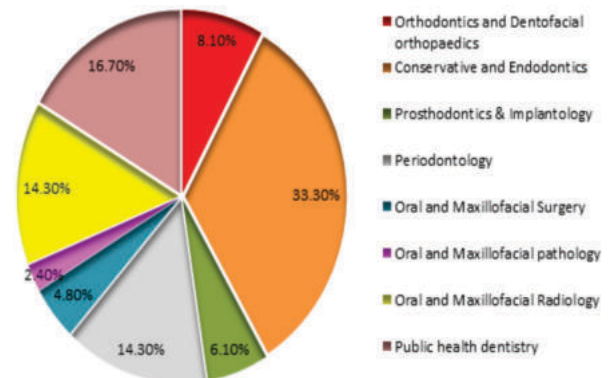
### Subjects And Methods:

This was an observational, qualitative, questionnaire-based survey approved by the Institutional Review Board (Ref: IGIDSIEC2020NRP29FAKAPPD). Sample size calculation was done using Survey Sample Size Calculator (95% confidence interval). Sample size calculated was 170 from among the General dental practitioners (including specialists) practicing in Puducherry with estimated 20% dropout. A database of dental practitioners was collected from Indian Dental Association (Puducherry). Participants

entered the study voluntarily. Study objectives and rationale were given in participant information sheet.

A comprehensive questionnaire containing 30 items was prepared from the previous research.<sup>[11]</sup> The survey questions were divided into 4 domains such as Individual details including name age, sex, and educational details, type of practice; and the knowledge, attitude and skill based questions were prepared based on the pediatric dental practices. Closed-ended questions and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to explore general dental practitioner's and specialist dentist's knowledge, attitude and skill based questions to achieve a detailed response. The questionnaire was pre-validated before administration. The test-retest reliability of the questions was assessed. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.80, which implied good internal consistency. After obtaining general dental practitioner's and specialist dentist's consent, the questionnaire was administered to them in their respective clinics and hospital and Google forms were also administered. Sufficient time was given for filling the questionnaire, and it was collected on the same day. The results obtained were tabulated and analyzed on a percentage basis.

### RESULTS:



Graph 1: Practitioners from different specialties

Out of the 200 questionnaires administered about 125 dentists answered the questionnaire. Response rate of this survey was found to be 73.5 % which is well within the range. Among the respondents, the majority of them were females 64% and male around 36%. With respect to age, 60% were in the age group of 25–35 years, 20% in the age group of 35–45 years, 15% in the age group of 45–55 years, and 5% of them in the age group of >55 years. Out of the total survey respondents 70% were General dental practitioners and 30% were dental practitioners from different specialities. (Graph: 1)

Among the survey participants 50% had been practicing for >5 years, 34% 5-10 years, 15% <10 years. On the basis of their patient inflow in a day 25% of them had at least 5-10 child patients, 75% examined < 5patients per day.

Knowledge of preventive and therapeutic approaches towards the management of dental conditions in children was assessed. Questions on preventive approaches like oral health education for children and parents were also assessed. When these questions were analyzed, about 62.4% of the general dentist examines the oral cavity of the infants and remaining dentist sometimes or never examines the oral cavity of the infants. It was great to know that about 64.7% of general dentist do behaviour management for the children. And among them 85.9% of the dentist preferred doing tell show do, 8.2 % modelling, 3.5% home and other 2.4% of the shows videos.

Only 49.4% of the dentist knows the importance of pit and fissure sealants for primary teeth. Only 55 % of the dentist preferred it is for shallow pit and fissures, rest 25.9% dentist preferred pit and fissure sealant for the deep and stained pit and fissure, 5% preferred Pit and fissures for Deep cavitated pit and fissures, and 14%of them preferred pit and fissure for all of the above conditions irrespective of the indication of pit and fissure sealants. Among them 41.2% evaluated the clinical success rate in follow up visit. 52.9% dentist in this survey preferred applying APF as supplement for fluoride preventive measures for caries control. Among them 71% of dental practitioners preferred fluoride varnish, 29.4% preferred NAF.

Nearly 50.6% if the dental practitioners were confident in performing endodontic procedures in primary teeth , remaining preferred prescribing antibiotics and extraction for the deciduous teeth which is indicated for Pulpotomy. Materials for dental pulp fixation during a pulpotomy procedure in deciduous teeth vary from fixation of pulp to regeneration. Majority of participants (51.8%) have chosen formocresol as a material of choice for fixations of pulp tissue in pulpotomy.

Nearly 78.8% of the practitioners most frequently used calcium hydroxide (30.6%) and calcium hydroxide & Iodoform paste (48.2%), and only 16.5% of them preferred ZnOe. Surprisingly 4.7% of the practitioners selected Gutta Percha as Obturating material for deciduous teeth. Only 32.5% of the dentist knew the importance of placing crown on endodontically treated primary teeth, 69.4%of dentist preferred GIC as Final restoration after Pulpotomy, 5.9% preferred composite restoration as final restoration, 1.2% preferred Silver amalgam. When asked about esthetic restoration procedures in children, 45.9% preferred esthetic restoration in children, whereas 32.9% sometimes preferred esthetic restoration, 21.2% did not prefer esthetic restoration. Among them 45.9% preferred composite restoration, 41.2% preferred strip crown, 3.5% zirconia crown, and 9.4% preferred other restorations like GIC.

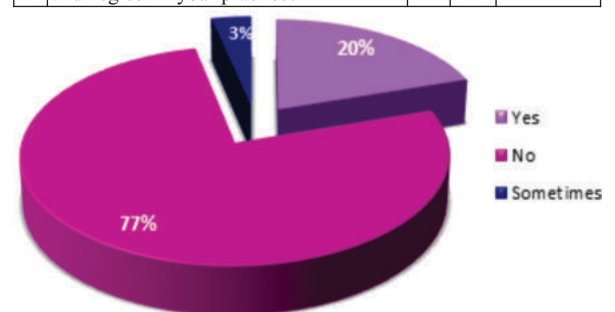
Among the survey respondents 76.5% felt advising space maintainers after extraction when indicated, 17.6% preferred sometimes and 5.9% only not aware about the importance of space maintainers. Among them 63.5% them answered that Band and loop are the most commonly given space maintainer in children and 12.9% told crown and loop, rest 23.6% of them answered lingual and palatal arch are the most commonly given space maintainer in children. About 87.1% of the dentist preferred giving habit breaking appliance when indicated but only 40% of them advice appliance and rarely refer those patients to pediatric dentist. Out of the 80% dentist advising habit breaking appliance for children with oral habits, 41.2% gave Fixed tongue crib, 41.2% Lip bumper, 16.5%Nance palatal arch, 4.7 % lingual arch and 37.7% Commercially available trainer in their routine practice.

At about 88.3% of the General dental practitioners found difficulty in treating a special child in their routine dental practice and 43.5 % answered patient's behaviour, 23.5% level of patient's disability and

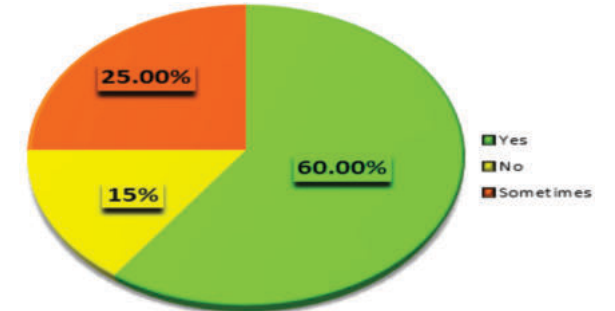
33% told other hindering factors like dental equipment as reason for difficulty in treating special children. About 76.5% of the General dentist encountered abused and neglected child in the practice , the common finding they usually they see are 32.8% as contusion and bruises around the peri-oral region, 28.2% as traumatized or avulsed teeth , 27% encountered oral ulcerations and remaining 12% encountered fractures of maxilla and mandible, and other findings. Attitude and Skill based questions about Pediatric dental practices questions were assessed. (Table: 1, Graph: 2, 3)

**Table 1: Knowledge And Skill Based Questions Regarding Pediatric Dental Practices**

S. No	Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)
1.	Do you examine the oral cavity of infants?	62.4	7	30.6
2.	Do you provide oral health education to parents during routine dental check up?	88.2	3.6	8.2
3.	Do you use behaviour management for children?	64.7	2.4	32.9
4.	Do you use pit and fissure sealants for primary teeth in your practice?	49.4	22.4	28.2
5.	Do you evaluate clinical success rate in Follow-up visits after pit and fissure sealants?	41.2	24.7	34.1
6.	Do you advice topical fluoride application for children?	72.9	5.9	21.2
7.	Do you educate your patients and their Parents about importance of fluoridated tooth paste?	85.9	7.1	7
8.	Is direct pulp capping indicated in primary teeth?	31.8	36.5	31.7
9.	Do you perform endodontic procedures in primary teeth?	50.6	24.7	24.7
10.	Do you perform esthetic restorations in children?	45.9	21.2	32.9
11.	Do you give space maintainer after extraction when indicated?	76.5	5.9	17.6
12.	Do you examine for different oral habits in children?	85.9	4.7	9.4
13.	Do abnormal oral habits needs intervention in children?	84.7	1.2	14.1
14.	Do you give habit breaking appliances to children when indicated?	87	1.2	11.8
15.	Do you give myo functional appliances in your routine dental practice, when indicated?	29.4	25.9	44.7
16.	Did you ever see a case of child abuse and neglect in your practice?	59.5	23.5	17



**Graph 2: General Dental Practitioners Treating Children With Special Health Care Needs**



**Graph 3: Referral of child patients to Pediatric Dentists**

**DISCUSSION:**

In spite of the noticeable improvement in the speciality, still the treatment plan and quality of treatment provided for child is compromised. General dental practitioners are expected to diagnose and manage effectively oral health related diseases of the child that are within their knowledge. But most of the times due to the uncontrollable behaviour of the child and lack of knowledge regarding pediatric dental practices there is difficulty in providing treatment to them. Hence this survey was planned to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice guidelines of general dental practitioners regarding pediatric dental practices in Puducherry, India.

According to AAPD 2014, AAP the first dental visit should be within 6 months of eruption of the first teeth.<sup>[12]</sup> In this survey, about 62.4% of the general dentist examines the oral cavity of the infants and remaining dentist sometimes or never examines the oral cavity of the infants. Almost 88.2% of the dental practitioners and specialist told that they will provide Oral health education to parent during routine dental check up. 85% of them educate their patients and parents about the importance of fluoridated tooth paste and brushing twice daily, and 7.1% of dentist educates less frequently.<sup>[7]</sup>

Children are not young adults, their behaviour, attitude, ability to understand, imagination, logical thinking, reasoning, etc., vary considerably from that of adults and also from each other. Pediatric Dentistry is one such specialty which primarily focuses on the behaviour shaping and behaviour management of the patient, without which a dentist will not be able to perform any operator procedure. One of the most challenging problems faced by dental practitioners and dental students is behaviour management. Psychological variables such as anxiety, stress, children's maturity, previous dental experience, and legal requirements like parent's consent are involved in dental treatment interfering with professional performance.<sup>[13]</sup>

In spite of these hindrance it was great to know that about 64.7% of general dentist do behaviour management for the children and among them 85% of the dentist prefer doing tell show do, 9% modelling, 3.5% home and other 2.4% of the shows videos. It is in agreement with the study done by Ravindran et al., Sharath et al, Adair et al. and Sotto et al.<sup>8,14,15,16]</sup> where both undergraduate and postgraduate practitioners answered that 63.6% of undergraduate dentists and 60.6% of postgraduate dentists consider tell show do as an effective non pharmacological behaviour management techniques.

As a preventive measure to prevent the initiation and progression of dental caries Sealants and fluorides are one of the best ways. In this survey only 49.4% of the dentist only knows the importance of pit and fissure sealants for primary teeth. Among them only 55 % of the dentist preferred it is for shallow pit and fissures, rest 25.9% dentist preferred pit and fissure sealant for the deep and stained pit and fissure, 5% preferred Pit and fissures for Deep Cavitated pit and fissures, and 14% of them preferred pit and fissure for all of the above conditions irrespective of the indication of pit and fissure sealants, out of them 41.2% evaluated the clinical success rate in follow up visit. According to AAPD, 5% NaF and 1.23% APF are the most commonly used agent for professionally applied fluoride treatment. In this survey 52.9% dentist prefer applying APF as supplement for fluoride preventive measures for caries control, where 71% of dental practitioners preferred fluoride varnish, 29.4% preferred NAF, which was in agreement with Sharma et al.<sup>[7,17]</sup>

Esthetic plays an important role in the psychological well being of the children, although it is cost effective, still esthetic is important for the child. In this survey only 45.9% of the General Dental practitioners and Specialist dentist preferred esthetic restoration in children, whereas 32.9% sometimes preferred esthetic restoration, 21.2% did not prefer esthetic restoration. Among them 45.9% preferred composite restoration, 41.2% preferred strip crown, 3.5% zirconia crown, and 9.4% preferred other restorations like GIC.

Maintaining deciduous teeth in the arch is important as it maintains the integrity of the arch and it acts as natural space maintainers. When the caries is untreated at the earlier stages it leads to the irreversible state. The diagnosis of pulpal disease is often cumbersome, especially in pediatric patients because they are usually unable to give an accurate of their symptoms. From ages there have been two methods for endodontic treatment in primary teeth, namely pulpotomy and pulpectomy. Hence it's important to know the basic diagnosis and

treatment planning of the deciduous teeth. When questions were asked about pediatric endodontic procedures, only 50.6% of the dental practitioners were confident in performing endodontic procedures in primary teeth. Among them 31.8% preferred direct pulp capping as the first line of therapy irrespective of their pulpal status. Nearly 78.8% of the practitioners most frequently used calcium hydroxide (30.6%) and calcium hydroxide & Iodoform paste (48.2%), and only 16.5% of them preferred ZnO-E, Unusually 4.7% of the practitioners selected Gutta Percha as Obturating material for deciduous teeth. This shows the lack of awareness of Pediatric endodontic procedure and importance of preserving deciduous tooth in its arch; the results of the study are in agreement with the studies done by Rani TS et al, Acharya S et al.<sup>[18,19]</sup>

Permanent restoration only decided the success of endodontic treatment in children. The AAPD approves the use of Stainless Steel Crowns as the best choice of restoration after pulp therapy, relatively the minimal usage of Stainless Steel crowns in Deciduous teeth may be due to the lack of practice among General Dentists.<sup>[1]</sup> In our study the final restoration preferred for endodontically treated primary tooth was 60 % Among them Only 22.5% of the dentist knew the importance of placing crown on endodontically treated primary teeth, 69.4% of dentist preferred GIC as Final restoration after Pulpectomy, 5.9% preferred composite restoration as final restoration, Only 23.5% preferred Stainless Steel crown as final restoration and 1.2% preferred Silver amalgam. The results from our study may be due to the lack of awareness of indication of stainless steel crowns after endodontic treatment, Most of the dentists preferred GIC which may be due to the ease of use and easy availability.<sup>[19]</sup>

According to Hinrichsen in 1982, Space maintainer is an appliance to prevent malocclusions such as ectopic eruption, crowding, cross bite, rotation etc., AAPD also emphasizes the same. In this survey Almost 76.5% of private practitioner advised space maintainers after extraction when indicated, 17.6% preferred sometimes and 5.9% only not aware about the importance of space maintainers. Among them 63.5% them answered that Band and loop are the most commonly given space maintainer in children and 12.9% told crown and loop, rest of them answered lingual and Nance palatal arch are the most commonly given space maintainer in children.<sup>[20]</sup>

Malocclusion in children is the common problem faced by almost every child, some may be self correcting like ugly duckling stage, anterior deep bite, etc., other problems like skeletal malocclusion and malocclusion caused by oral habits should be intervened at the earlier stage, failing that it will lead to surgical and fixed orthodontic treatment which may be burden to the children in the developmental stage. Preventive and intercepting the malocclusion is the duty of all dentists.<sup>[4,5]</sup> In our survey 85.9% of the dentist examined for different oral habits in children, and 9.4% of them examined sometimes, and 4.7% never examined for the oral habits. About 80% of the dentist preferred giving habit breaking appliance when indicated but only 40% of them give appliance and rarely referred to pediatric dentist. Only 29.4% of the general dentist is aware of the indication and importance of myofunctional appliance is correcting the developing malocclusion.

Treating children with special health care needs is one of the important part in pediatric dentistry, Insufficient behavioural management skills and lack of training in the field prevent dentist from treating special child which is evident from the results of the our study, where almost 77% of the General dental practitioners found difficulty in treating a special child in their routine dental practice and 43.5 % answered patients behaviour, 23.4% level of patients disability and 33% told other hindering factors like dental equipment as reason for difficulty in treating special children.<sup>[3,5]</sup>

Child abuse and neglect is one of the serious issues which hampers the both physical, emotional growth and development of the child. In our study About 76.5% of the General dentist encounters abused and neglected child in the practice, the common finding they usually they observe are Contusion and bruises around the perioral region 32.9%, 28.2% as traumatized or avulsed teeth, 27% encountered oral ulcerations and remaining encountered fractures of maxilla and mandible, and findings. The finding of our study emphasizes the need of educational programs in dental curriculum to assess, detect and report any such case of child abuse and neglect.<sup>[21]</sup>

When practitioners were asked about the referral of child patients to

the pediatric dentist about only 50% answered that they refer to pediatric dentist and other 20% sometimes refer when needed, and rest 30% of the practitioners never refer the patient to pediatric dentist, the result of the survey indicate less favourable referral rate. When to treat and when to refer to specialist, should be based on honest appraisal of skill levels.<sup>[11]</sup>

When dentists was asked about their opinion regarding how much their undergraduate training had enabled them treat the children efficiently, majority of them told that they have been given enough training to diagnose, but due to lack of clinical exposure, almost all of the respondents felt difficulty in managing children and performing essential procedures like pulpectomy. Seale and Cassamassio were of the opinion that lack of specialized training in the pediatric dental practices is the main lacunae for the decreased care of children by general dentist, which was in agreement by the majority of the participant of our study.<sup>[6]</sup>

### CONCLUSION:

From this study it can be concluded that general dental practitioners and specialist dentist are keeping an update in changing trends regarding Pediatric dental practices, but still most of them need to be educated about the importance of primary dentition. Their attitude is highly notable, but in practice, patient's referral to the respectful profession is the utmost important part in the management of oral health related issues.

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