



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

INSIGHTS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE DENTAL PRACTITIONERS OF UTTARAKHAND: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

KEY WORDS: COVID-19, dentists, lockdown, tele-dentistry

Garima Pant

PhD. Scholar, Department of Family Resource Management, College of Home Science, GBPUAT, Pantnagar, U.S. Nagar, Uttarakhand, India

Deepa Vinay*

Professor, Department of Family Resource Management, College of Home Science, GBPUAT, Pantnagar, U.S. Nagar, Uttarakhand, India*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is a public health emergency of International concern. The dental professionals are considered to be at high risk, as most of the treatments may lead to the spread of infection due to direct proximity with saliva, blood, and aerosols generation. In response to Covid-19, doctors and health care processes were interviewed, leading to increased responses around the Uttarakhand State, with a sample size of 80 dental practitioners which were selected by snowball sampling technique. Difficulties among the dental practitioners during the onset of COVID 19 pandemic were investigated. It was discovered that Age, work experience, change work days during pandemic and annual pay were found to be significantly correlated at 1 percent level of significance with the impact of COVID 19 on the dental practitioners during COVID 19 pandemic. Hence it is very crucial to Implement tele-dentistry and triage protocols i.e., Screen and triage everyone entering a dental healthcare facility for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Widespread education and modified practice may solve the problem partially.

Introduction

In response to Covid-19, doctors and health care processes were interviewed, leading to increased responses around the world. The role of dentists in preventing transmission and responding to long-term effects on dentistry is critical as it is severely affected. In this context, Ippolito et al. 1999 revealed that dental clinics can be a potential source of transmission of viruses, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV), to patients and practitioners. Thus, both dentists and patients can be at risk for microbial pathogens (Bolyard et al. 1999 and To KK et al. 2020). With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic lives of different people in different professions has greatly affected so as the life of dental practitioners, their attitude, perception towards their profession has also greatly affected by this pandemic. Peng et al. 2020 and CDC, 2020 have reported that due to the large number of dentists, dentists and other members of the dental team have an apparent likelihood of increasing the risk of introducing / transmitting a life-threatening viral infection and the other respiratory system in close contact with them. The dentists may practice cautiously and be prepared once the practice resumes. It is important to implement sound preventive measures in dental clinics and optimize their clinical practice to the changing trends to ensure safe and risk free practice. So the present survey aimed to analyze the post-COVID-19 impact among private dental practitioners in Uttarakhand.

Materials and Method

The present study was carried out in Uttarakhand with a sample size of 80 dental practitioners selected by snowball sampling technique. A questionnaire was designed, keeping into consideration the prevailing attitude and perception of dental practitioners for the COVID 19 pandemic. Different aspects of their profession were included in the questionnaire to study the impact of pandemic on their work.

Results and discussion

Table 1. Comparison of frequency and percentage distribution of dental practitioners on selected sample characteristics during COVID 19

S.No	General information	Before pandemic	During pandemic
1	Schedule		
	Morning	8 (10)	55 (68.75)
	Evening	4 (5)	8 (10.00)
	Fulday	68 (85)	17 (21.25)

2.	Number of work day		
	6 days	52 (65)	58 (72.50)
	7 days	28 (35)	14 (17.50)
	5 days	0	8 (10.00)
3.	Average working hr/day		
	≤3hours	0	8 (10.00)
	4-6 hrs	9 (11.25)	51 (63.75)
	7-9 hrs	60 (75)	21 (26.25)
	10 hrs and above	11 (13.75)	0
4	Number of patients attended per day		
	≤5	1 (1.25)	21 (26.25)
	6 to 10	24 (30)	46 (57.50)
	11 to 15	25 (31.25)	10 (12.50)
	>15	30 (37.5)	3 (3.75)
5	Number of patient attended in peak working hours		
	≤5	29 (36.25)	73 (91.25)
	6-10	42 (52.5)	7 (8.75)
	>10	9 (11.25)	0

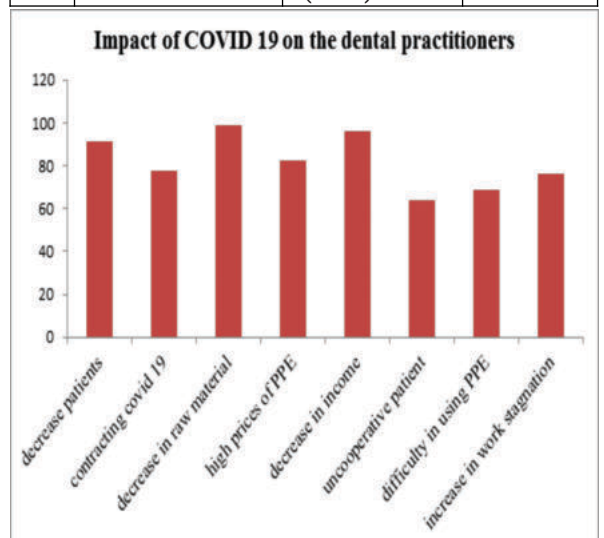


Figure 1. Impact of COVID 19 on the dental practitioners

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of Attitude and perception of dental practitioners during pandemic

S.No	Statement	Yes	No
1.	Taking extra oral radiographs instead of intraoral (e.g., panoramic radiography) to avoid gag reflex.	53 (66.25)	27 (33.75)
2.	Implementing a pre-appointment screening process via text, telephone, or email should be considered as best to avoid the spread	80 (100)	0

Table 3: Co-relation between work-worker related variable and impact of COVID 19 on the dental practitioners during pandemic

S.No	Variables	r-value	p-values
	Worker related variables		
1	Age	0.373	0.001**
	Work related variable		
1.	Work experience	0.385	0.0004**
2.	Change work days during pandemic	0.331	0.003**
3.	Patient numbers	0.309	0.005**
4.	Change in patient numbers during pandemic	0.309	0.005**
5.	Annual pay	0.398	0.0002**

Majority (98.75 %) believe that there was a decrease in the supply of raw material, followed by decrease in the income (96.25 %), decrease in the number of patients (91.25 %) due to which many faced financial stress in paying salaries to their assistants. Majority (76.25 %) of dental practitioners were stagnated in their practice as the work had been greatly hampered during the covid-19 due to changed work days, working hours, decline in number of patients, monotonous schedule of the practice, doing the repetitive operations during work, lack of interest, absenteeism, and unsupportive behavior of staff member also contributed in increasing work stagnation. Many of them (82.5 %), faced problems due to the rise in the price of PPE (Figure 1). According to Farooq and Ali, 2020. In addition, the Irish Dental Association has reported that approximately 75 percent of dentists plan to lose more than 70 percent financially during the epidemic. Similar results were also found that reported dentists could become carriers of the virus unnoticed by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Wax and Christian, 2020). Dental services in the early days of the pandemic were therefore limited to emergencies (Guo et al. 2020).

From the results it was revealed that everyone, believed that to deal with this challenging situation of pandemic it was very important to implement a pre-appointment screening process via text, telephone, or email to avoid the spread (100 %) also, 37.5 percent dental practitioners did not find tele-dentistry very effective in dealing with dental issues, as it does not help in resolving the major complications of oral cavity, for the surgical procedures, proper diagnosis they have to see the patient in person (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

Dental health care personnel need to understand the implications of potential transmission of the (SARS)-CoV-2 virus in a clinical setup. Hence, they need to keep themselves updated with any new information regarding this disease. New approaches such as Tele-dentistry will help dentists assist patients without adding the risk of cross infection. The recent state of affairs obligates the need to strike a balance between the safety of the healthcare professionals yet providing optimum dental care to the patients requiring emergency intervention.

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