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Universidade Federal da Paraíba  
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# Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Parents Regarding Primary Teeth Care of their Children in Davangere city, India

## Conhecimentos, Atitudes e Práticas dos Pais Quanto aos Cuidados com os Dentes Decíduos de seus Filhos na Cidade de Davangere, Índia

Nagaveni N. B.<sup>1</sup>, Radhika N. B.<sup>2</sup>, Umashankar K. V.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Senior Lecture, Department of Pedodontics & Preventive Dentistry, D. J. College of Dental Sciences & Research, Modinagar, India.

<sup>2</sup>Orthodontist, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, D. J. College of Dental Sciences & Research, Modinagar, India.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Avaliar o conhecimento, atitudes e práticas de pais da cidade de Davangere, Índia, a respeito do cuidado com os dentes decíduos de seus filhos.

**Método:** Mil questionários contendo aproximadamente 10 perguntas em dois idiomas (Inglês e em dialeto local) foram distribuídos aos pais da cidade de Davangere, Índia. As respostas foram tabuladas e os resultados expressos por meio da distribuição de frequência (absoluta e percentual).

**Resultados:** A maioria dos pais não tinham consciência da importância dos dentes decíduos. Apenas 4% dos entrevistados tinham conhecimento sobre os dentes decíduos. Quando perguntados sobre a importância dos dentes decíduos, 82% dos pais disseram que esses elementos dentários não são importantes. Quanto à frequência de escovação, a maioria (91,1%) dos pais relatou que eles solicitavam que os seus filhos escovassem os dentes uma única vez ao dia. Noventa vírgula seis por cento dos pais afirmaram que escolheriam os pediatras dos seus filhos. Apesar de trazerem os filhos ao cirurgião-dentista regularmente para consultas de rotina, muitos preferem não restaurá-los, mas deixá-los como estão (32%) e até mesmo extraí-los (61%).

**Conclusão:** Verifica-se uma falta de conhecimento entre a maioria dos pais de Davangere, relativas aos cuidados com a dentição decídua de seus filhos. Deste modo, um alto nível de consciência era obviamente desejável entre esses pais.

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of parents of Davangere city, India, regarding the care of primary teeth.

**Methods:** 1000 questionnaires containing about 10 questions written both in English and local language (Kannada) were prepared for data collection and were personally distributed to 1000 parents of Davangere city. Responses obtained were tabulated and the results of the questionnaire were expressed as frequency distribution and computed in percentages.

**Results:** Most of the parents were unaware of the importance of the primary teeth. Only 4% of parents had knowledge about primary teeth. When questioned about the importance of primary teeth, 82% of parents told that primary teeth are not important. For frequency of brushing, majority (91.1%) of parents reported that only once they ask their children to brush in a day. 90.6% parents stated that they would choose their child's paediatricians. Despite bringing their children to the dentist on a regular basis for check-ups, many would prefer not to have these teeth filled but would rather that they were left (32%) or even extracted (61%).

**Conclusion:** There is a lack of knowledge in majority of parents of Davangere, pertaining to primary teeth care of their children. Thus, a high level of awareness was obviously desirable among these parents.

### DESCRITORES

Dentição decídua; Conhecimentos, atitudes e prática em saúde; Cuidado da criança.

### KEYWORDS

Dentition, primary; Health knowledge, attitudes, practice; Child care.

## INTRODUCTION

Teeth are the valuable greatest asset to the human beings. Among the two sets of teeth, the first set of teeth i.e., primary teeth or milk teeth is very important for children for eating, phonetics, aesthetics, and even for space maintenance for permanent teeth.

Any problems in milk teeth can cause distress to a child in the form of inability to chew or speak properly, pain and swelling. Milk teeth have to be well looked after to ensure that child has a happy and healthy dental start.

Parents are the one who take care of their children hence they should have knowledge about the primary teeth, their health and caring in order to build confidence in their children through tiny teeth. But still in developing countries like India the parental awareness about these first set of teeth is very less. Thus there is increased prevalence of early childhood caries seen in children<sup>1</sup>.

There is no documented research on parental awareness of primary teeth in India. So the present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of parents of Davangere city, India regarding the care of primary teeth. The present study might be the first and give pave for further studies to be conducted in different parts of India.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted among 1000 parents of Davangere city, Karnataka, India, who were selected by random sampling.

1000 questionnaires containing about 10 questions written both in English and local language (Kannada) were prepared for data collection and were personally distributed to the parents of Davangere.

The responders were then asked to tick the most appropriate correct answer from the given list of answers, in order to assess their knowledge, attitude and practices regarding the primary teeth care. Responses obtained were tabulated and the results of the questionnaire were expressed as frequency distribution and computed in percentages.

Data were computerized and analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

## RESULTS

The responses obtained are tabulated in tables from 1 to 10.

**Table 1. Knowledge about primary teeth.**

Knowledge	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	40	4.0
No	960	96.0
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 2. Importance of primary teeth.**

Important	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	180	18.0
No	820	82.0
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 3. Frequency of brushing in primary teeth.**

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Only once	911	91.1
Twice	19	19.0
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 4. Reasons for decay.**

Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
Chocolates	780	78
Prolonged bottle feeding	02	2.0
Too much sweets	200	20.0
Improper brushing	18	1.8
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 5. First place of contact when pain occurs.**

First place of contact	Respondents	Percentage
Pediatrician	906	90.6
General dentist	80	8.0
Pedodontist	14	1.4
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 6. Reasons for seeking doctor.**

Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
Decay	120	12.0
Pain	800	80.0
Improper eruption of teeth	80	8.0
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 7. Selection of treatment for decayed primary teeth.**

Selection of treatment	Respondents	Percentage
Filling	70	7.0
Extraction	610	61.0
Left alone	320	32.0
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 8. Awareness about Pediatric dentist.**

Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	5.7
No	943	94.3
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 9. Awareness of different primary teeth treatments.**

Different treatments	Respondents	Percentage
Filling	670	67
Stainless steel crown	56	5.6
Space maintainance	148	14.8
Pit and fissure sealants	27	2.7
Total	1000	100.0

**Table 10. Awareness of pernicious oral habits.**

Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	140	14
No	860	86
Total	1000	100.0

## DISCUSSION

Parent's knowledge is considered to be very important in taking dental care of a child since its birth. Thus the present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge of parents of Davangere city about the care of primary teeth of their children.

In this study, only 4% of parents had knowledge about primary teeth. The remaining 96% of parents had no knowledge about primary teeth. As they did not have any knowledge about milk teeth, it was assumed that there is no question of implementing the preventive primary health care measures and awareness should be created first. The reason for poor knowledge and low value about primary teeth was not understood. This might be due to beliefs or cultural based opinions.

When questioned about the importance of primary teeth, 82% of parents told that primary teeth are not important. They gave explanation that, they are temporary teeth and they will fall and replaced by new second set of teeth. Some authors<sup>2,3</sup> have reported that some cultures place little value on primary teeth and that caries and early loss of the primary dentition is an accepted occurrence.

A qualitative study of carers in Saipan, including Filipino carers, found that the low value attributed to baby teeth was an obstacle to developing effective prevention programs<sup>4</sup>. In another qualitative study, Finnish carers of pre-school children made comments relating the lack of importance of the primary teeth, compared with general health<sup>5</sup>.

For frequency of brushing, majority (91.1%) of parents reported that only once they ask their children to brush in a day. It was found that even parents themselves brush their teeth only once. So they advised the same practice for their children also. Similar study shows that only 8% of the mothers used tooth brush and tooth paste for cleaning their children's teeth<sup>6</sup>.

When parents were asked whom do they want to see when pain occurs, 90.6% parents stated that, they would choose their child's paediatricians. Parents expressed that, paediatricians were trained to assess the oral cavity and if there were any oral health problems present, the paediatricians would refer them to an appropriate dental provider. Paediatricians are considered to be in unique position to contribute to the dental health of

their young patients because of the early age at which children are brought to them and because parents accept their suggestions readily. This highly recommends that the possible integration of a pediatric dentist with the paediatric set up is very essential.

The other 8% of parents would like to consult their own dentists rather than pediatric dentist.

About 80% of parents reported that, when child complains of pain in primary teeth, they visit doctor, when asked about the reason for seeking treatment. The other 8% parents expressed that, they consult doctor even when the permanent teeth are not erupted at expected time after exfoliation of primary teeth. And also when the permanent teeth erupted in wrong position (back) to retained primary teeth, they will see the doctor. This shows they worried more about the permanent teeth but not the primary teeth.

From this finding it was assumed that despite noticing the decayed teeth they did not show interest to take treatment for their children until it became worsen leading to pain, and then seek treatment with no other way for that pain. In one study, only 37% of the mothers had taken their children to a dentist before. The visits were for symptoms of pain and tooth decay<sup>6</sup>.

When asked about the treatment choices preferred by parents for carious primary teeth, the attitude of parents was interesting. Despite bringing their children to the dentist on a regular basis for check-ups, many would prefer not to have these teeth filled but would rather that they were left (32%) or even extracted (61%). This may be, to some extent, a culturally based attitude among these parents. In a United Kingdom study, only 47% expressed a preference for having a decayed primary tooth filled, while 28% preferred having the tooth extracted and 15% wanted the tooth left alone<sup>7</sup>.

When questioned for the awareness about pediatric dentist, 94.3% of parents were not aware of pediatric dentist. Whenever there is a need they consult general dentist rather than a pediatric dentist. This shows the lack of knowledge about the value of pediatric dentist and his duties. Many of parents did not know that pediatric dentist is the right person to see children.

Previous study described the variety of dental services provided to child patients by general dentists and paediatric dentists and the results demonstrated that paediatric dentists perceive that they provide a broader scope of treatments including restorative, endodontic, orthodontic services, and many other treatments when compared to general dentists who performed limited paediatric treatments<sup>8</sup>.

For the question of awareness of different treatment for primary teeth, 67% of parents know about filling

treatment for decayed primary teeth. They have no idea about other treatments like, stainless steel crown placement, space maintainer and pit and fissure sealants application. They thought that, only for adults, broad range of treatments is available but not for primary teeth. Hence awareness and knowledge about different treatment procedures should be delivered to make them understood.

To create such awareness, educational campaigns should be conducted through educational institution (including undergraduates, post graduates, interneers) to school, social activity rotary clubs showing the moulds, charts and posters, demonstrating pictures of various treatment procedures.

Awareness about bad habits and their consequences on oro-facial-dental development was not seen in majority of parents (86%). With the help of educational programmes such awareness can be created.

Awareness programmes should be developed for parents to encourage them to seek preventive primary teeth health care. These programmes should emphasize the possible consequences of decay, improper cleaning, and prolonged use of sweets and should be extended to school teachers also, so that they can educate parents. It is recommended that medical professionals, obstetricians, gynaecologists and paediatricians encourage parents to seek professional oral health counselling as soon as possible especially as soon as or before the primary teeth start to erupt.

## CONCLUSION

There is a lack of knowledge in majority of parents of Davangere city, India pertaining to primary teeth care of their children. Most of the parents were unaware of the importance of the primary teeth. These people need advice and training regarding the care of primary teeth as they are exposed to medical care but not dental care at an early age. Thus, a high level of awareness regarding the primary teeth is obviously desirable among these parents.

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### Correspondência:

Dr. Nagaveni N. B.  
Department of Pedodontics & Preventive Dentistry  
D. J. College of Dental Sciences & Research  
Modinagar 201204 Ghaziabad, UP  
Phone: +91 9448929585  
E-mail: nagavenianurag@gmail.com