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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

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RESUMO

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

Método: Mil questionários contendo aproximadamente 10 perguntas em dois idiomas Inglês e em dialeto local (Kannada) 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 deciduos. Apenas 4% dos entrevistados tinham conhecimento sobre os dentes deciduos. Quando perguntados sobre a importância dos dentes deciduos, 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 virgula seis porcento 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 extrai-los (61%).

Conclusão: Verifica-se uma falta de conhecimento entre a maioria dos pais de Davangere, relativos aos cuidados com a dentição decidua 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 decidua; 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 children1.

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Knowledge about primary teeth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Importance of primary teeth.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Frequency of brushing in primary teeth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Reasons for decay.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged bottle feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much sweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper brushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. First place of contact when pain occurs.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First place of contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedodontist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Reasons for seeking doctor.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper eruption of teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Selection of treatment for decayed primary teeth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Awareness about Pediatric dentist.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Awareness of different primary teeth treatments.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different treatments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless steel crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space maintainance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit and fissure sealants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that there is no ques
have any knowledge about milk teeth, it was assumed
about primary teeth. The remaining 96% of parents
of primary teeth of their children.
Thus the present study was undertaken to assess the
importance in taking dental care of a child since its birth.
It might be due to beliefs or cultural based opinions.
value about primary teeth was not understood. This
created the preven
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 authors2,3 have reported that
some cultures place little value on primary teeth and
that caries and early loss of the primary den
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
programs4. In another qualitative study, Finnish carers of
pre-school children made comments relating the lack of
importance of the primary teeth, compared with general
health5.
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 teeth6.
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
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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 decay4.
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 alone7.
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 treatments8.
For the question of awareness of different treatment
for primary teeth, 67% of parents know about filling

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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
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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, internees) 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 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.

**REFERENCES**