

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Assessing public Health Awareness and Misconception about Oral Health and Severity of Oral Health Problems

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Oral health is fundamental to our general health. India is a developing country with people of different beliefs and practices. In India, people from various cultural backgrounds reside and there is a very strong influence of the various myths on health-seeking behaviour in our population. People tend to have faith in spiritual treatment and alternate forms of medicine, instead of coming to a health professional they visit a local traditional practitioner. The aim of this study is to investigate oral hygiene awareness and Misconception regarding oral health through a questionnaire. **Methodology:** Total 598 participants visiting kosmo dental academy, Hyderabad, India were enrolled into the study. A structured, self-administered, close ended questionnaire in English and Telugu was given to each patient. Out of which 400 patients completed the survey. **Result:** 93.5% respondent reported that they visit the dentist only when they have a problem. 43% respondent stated that they avoid dentist mainly due to cost reason and 39.2% due to fear reason. 62% reported that they brushed their teeth once daily. The majority of respondents were afraid of local anaesthesia 67%. When we compare root canal treatment and tooth extraction 51% were keen for root canal but 49% were not. In favour of saving the tooth. 85% respondents were having misconception that tooth extraction affects the eyesight or causes neck pain. 89% respondents avoid oral surgeries just because of fear and myths heard from relatives or friends. Around 68% respondent uses clove oil to relieve the pain at home compared to 32% visit the dentist for pain. **Conclusion:** From the present study we can conclude that majority of study population believes in myths/misconception regarding oral health awareness and oral health related problems. Mass education regarding oral health is important and should be carried out to spread awareness and educate the mass.

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INTRODUCTION

Oral health is an essential and integral part of general health. Substandard oral health has an influence on quality of life. Vaghela et al in 2022 stated that "Oral health status reflects the general health and quality of life".¹ Oral diseases are significantly prevalent all over the world and seems to have direct correspondence with low awareness and misconception about oral health.² There has been a significant advancement in the quality of dental care over the past century; however, a considerable proportion of the population still leading the misconceptions / myths passed from generation to generation.³ The misconception concept in the field of dentistry is a grave one. Many myths are still regarded as sacred truths, plenty of which relate to tooth extraction, tooth brushing methods and restorations.³ The prevalence of these myths and

misconceptions was associated with a lack of education and mostly with the population living in rural area.⁴ India is a developing country with people of different religion, beliefs and practices. Due to this diversity, it faces many challenges in delivering health care needs. The majority of Indian population are located in rural areas. In India, people come from various cultural backgrounds and they have a very strong influence on the myths of oral health. People tend to have faith in spiritual treatment and alternate forms of medicine, instead of coming to a health professional.⁵ These misconceptions are analysed by another research conducted in Bhopal, India, which confirmed a vast difference between the actual oral health concepts and what the population believe.⁶ These oral health misconceptions lead to ignorance towards oral health leading to a deteriorated overall

health status.^{7,8} In dentistry, most beliefs (non proven fact) guide the patients in the wrong protocol which can lead to difficulty for a dentist to provide a satisfying treatment.

The current study aims to assess public Health Awareness and Misconception about Oral Health and Severity of Oral Health Problems.

METHODOLOGY

The present cross sectional study was done to assess the knowledge attitude about the oral health and misconceptions about the oral health and severity of oral health problems among general population. The study population consisted of patients visiting Kosmo dental academy, Hyderabad, India. An informed consent was obtained from the patients who agreed to get involve into the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Patient who refused to participate in the study and Patient who couldn't comprehend the questions of the study

Setting

A questionnaire based study was carried out from October 2024 to March 2025. The study was carried out at Kosmo dental academy, Hyderabad, India.

Questionnaire

Self-completion questionnaires were developed by literature search and informal discussion and structured feedback from the expert team of kosmo dental academy and some private dental practitioners. The questionnaire was made in English which was translated into the local language and then again translated back to English to check the linguistic validity. A 20 variable, structured, self-administered, close ended questionnaire in English and Telugu was given to each patient.

RESULTS

A total of 598 patients were agreed to involve in the study and thus given the questionnaires. Out of which 400 patients completed the survey yielding a response rate of 66.8%. Of the respondents 86.8% reported that they were currently registered with a dentist, compared with 13.2% as non registered. The majority of respondents 93.5% reported that they visit the dentist only when they have a problem whereas 5% reported to dentist once a year and 1.5% twice a year. 43% respondent stated that they avoid dentist mainly due to cost reason and 39.2% due to fear reason. Just over two thirds of respondents 62% reported that they brushed their teeth once daily, whereas only 15% reported that they flossed at least once a day. Respondents were less aware of other oral health complications, such as swollen or bleeding gums 13.1% and compared to loose teeth 52%. The majority of respondents were afraid of local anaesthesia 67% and they don't have an idea whether LA is safe or

unsafe. When we compare root canal treatment and tooth extraction almost half of the respondent 51% were keen for root canal but 49% were not In favour of saving the tooth. 85% respondents were having misconception that tooth extraction affects the eyesight or causes neck pain. 89% respondents avoid oral surgeries just because of fear and myths heard from relatives or friends. Around 68% respondent uses clove oil to relieve the pain at home compared to 32% visit the dentist for pain. If the patient doesn't get relief then only they visit dentist.

DISCUSSION

The current study was done to assess the awareness and misconceptions regarding oral health. Every country has its own culture and beliefs and so does India. Its because of its diversity. We hear different myths/misconceptions which are passed from generation to generation without any strong scientific relation. The most common conception in the present study is that respondent visit dentist only when they have a problem (93.5%) whereas 5% reported to dentist once a year and 1.5% twice a year; Same results were reported by Graca et al 2019.⁹ In the present study 62% respondent reported that they brushed their teeth once daily and 15% flossed at least once a day these results are in accordance with Ericsson et al. 2012. They stated that 76% brushed their teeth at least once a day with only 4% of the sample flossing every day.¹⁰ Respondent in the present study were less aware of oral health complications like swollen or bleeding gums (13.1%) compared to loose teeth (52%) which are in contrast to results by Gambhir et al where 40.3% participants known about bleeding gums.¹¹ When we compare root canal treatment and tooth extraction 51% respondent were keen for root canal compared to 49% which are not In favour of saving the tooth. These results are in accordance with Allen et al 2008.¹²

The most common prevailing misconception in the present study is tooth extraction affects the eyesight or causes neck pain. 85% respondent were having this misconception which is in accordance with the previous studies.¹³ In the present study 89% respondents avoid oral surgeries due to fear and myths. The second most misconception in the present study is the use of clove oil to relieve the pain (68%) compared to 32% who visit the dentist for pain. These results were in accordance with the Khan et al 2024.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

From the present study we can conclude that majority of study population believes in myths/misconception regarding oral health awareness and oral health related problems. Mass education regarding oral health is important and should be carried out to spread awareness and educate the mass.

LIMITATIONS

The present study gathers only information about the oral health awareness and related myths. Further studies in longitudinal design are required to know the associated factors involved in misconception to completely eradicate myths. Taking account of myths that are predominantly observed in this region restricted our study to one region. However, some myths that can be generalized to all areas can be studied over a large area.

RECOMMENDATION

More studies are recommended using a larger, nationwide sample.

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