

Special Health Care Needs – Dentist Perception in Hyderabad, Telangana State.

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ABSTRACT

Background: In the practice of dentistry we come across patients who need to be attended with special care as they disabled. Treating such patients require knowledge and expertise to manage them with utmost care. Aim: The study aimed to explore dentists' perception and level of satisfaction with their dental education in preparing them to provide care to patients with special health care needs. **Methods:** This was a cross-sectional study. Study participants were dentists working in clinics in Hyderabad city, Telangana state. **Results:** Dentists reported good amount of confidence in caring for patients with special health care needs. A relationship existed between the quality of dental education and the dentists' perception of their patient care. A great proportion of respondents were willing to attain educational activities to enhance their knowledge and skills. **Conclusion:** There is a need to organize extensive programs on management of patients who need special health care services. However the level of perception and the confidence to treat such patients among the dentists belonging to Hyderabad city is satisfactory.

Keywords: Quality of healthcare, Special care, disabled patients.

INTRODUCTION

Treating individuals who need special health care is extremely challenging as it is not only to meet the needs and demand of the patient but as well it is a self-challenge to prove how best you are as a professional in managing such patients who need extensive care in handling them. According to people with disabilities with special needs –often require “special consideration when receiving dental treatments because of their developmental or cognitive conditions”. This can also include patients with Autism spectrum disorder, Alzheimer's disease, Down syndrome, or any conditions that make dental procedures more difficult.^[1] These individuals include, but are not limited to, people with developmental disabilities, complex medical problems and significant physical limitation.^[2] The awareness of the importance of oral health as a part of general health is becoming widespread.^[3] However, dental care remains the

most common unmet health care need.^[4,5] Though the BDS and MDS curriculum involves extensive training in teaching and expertising the students to treat most of the challenging cases, there is a need to know the perception of these dentist how confident are they in treating the patients who need special health care. Hence this study was designed to assess the knowledge of dentist regarding care and treatment for patients who need special health care.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional questionnaire study was conducted in and around Hyderabad within the range of 100 km in Telangana for about 3 months.

Participants were dentists working in Hyderabad, Telangana. 100 questionnaires were distributed to dentists from all fields of dentistry all the dentists working in different clinics were included in the study. Interns and undergraduates were not included in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to 100 dentists along with a letter describing the survey, and requesting participation and consent as well as granting anonymity. All those who willingly consent to participate in the study were asked to complete the questionnaire. [Figure 1]

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The questionnaire was answered in terms of YES/NO. The data obtained from the questionnaire was subjected to statistical analysis using Chi-square test.

RESULTS

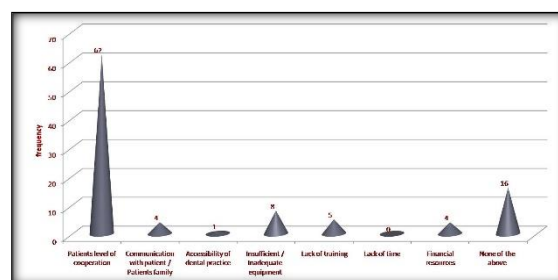
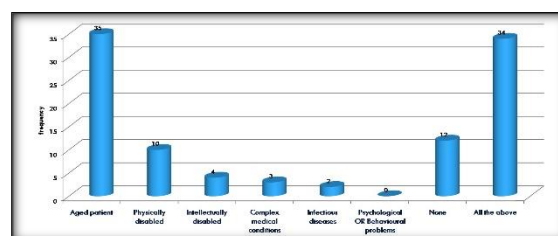
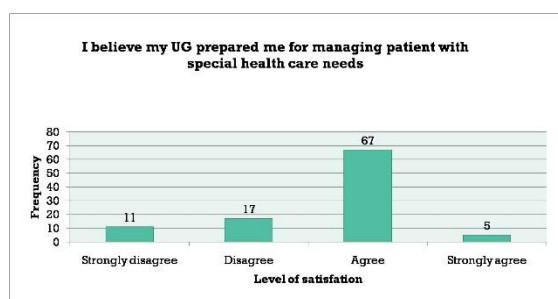
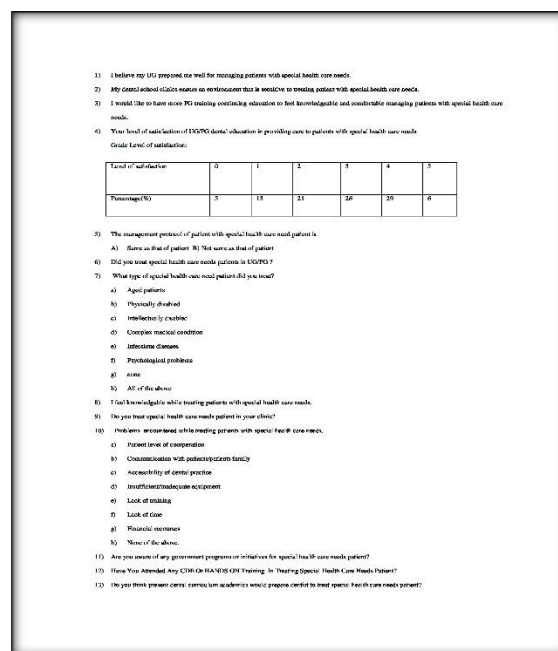
The study comprised of 100 clinical practitioners as dentist (n=100) who were actively practicing dentistry in Hyderabad city. When it was asked that whether under graduation prepared him/her well in managing patients well who need special health care the level of satisfaction was high with 67% dentist. 17% disagreed that they were not satisfied with their undergraduate training. [Graph 1]. Further, 33% of the practitioners felt that dental school environment is not sensitive to treating patient with special health care needs.

83% of the dentists felt that more PG training continuing education is required to feel knowledgeable and comfortable managing patients with special health care needs.

On grading the level of satisfaction of dentists on a scale of 5 regarding UG/PG dental education in providing care to patients with special health care needs, 5, 13, 21, 26, 29, 6 % of the dentists rated the grades respectively.

96% of practitioners felt there is a need to follow special care needs to manage disabled patients. Nevertheless 76% of the dentist have experienced treating such patients at their undergraduate level. On further questioning, 35% of dentists have had the experience of treating aged patients at UG level training rest 10% -Physically disabled, 4%-Intellectually disabled, 3% with Complex medical condition 2%- with Infectious diseases none experienced treating patients with Psychological problems. 12 % among the dentists did not experience treating the above mentioned conditions. But, 34% of the practitioners experienced treating almost all the above mentioned situations.

76% among of the study group felt knowledgeable while treating patients with special health care needs. 69% of dentist on routine basis are experienced to treat patients who need special health care needs at their your clinic. However 62% of dentists faced problems to deal with patient cooperation while treating disabled patients [Graph 3]. The proposed curriculum in UG/PG training should adopt the development of joint medical and dental curriculum modules that focus on the care of individuals with special health care needs. There is a need to create awareness about various government aided programs which train people about special health care needs as only 11% of the study group is aware about it. 64% of the dentists are not updated with CDE programs, workshops that teach treatment modalities to manage patients who need special care.



DISCUSSION

The current research was a cross-sectional study that aimed at exploring dentists perception about their dental education outcome and level of satisfaction with undergraduate and/or post graduate dental education in preparing them to provide care for patients with special health care needs. It targeted dentists practicing in and around Hyderabad city {within 100kms range around Hyderabad city} Telangana in the year 2018.

In the current study, more than two thirds of the dentists agreed with the statement that their undergraduate education and teaching environment prepared them well for managing patients with special health care needs. Whereas, one of the study found that in Saudi Arabia, dentists who treat patients with special needs are dental pediatrics; there are no dental specialists to manage patients who are adults with special needs, and there are no structured dental programs or courses for undergraduate dental students.^[6]

About 67% of the respondents cited necessity to have more PG training continuing education to feel knowledgeable in treating Special health care patients. This is in accordance with the study conducted in Saudi Arabia where about 2/3 rd's of dentists stated that they needed more pg training for treating special needs patients⁶. When asked about level of satisfaction about UG/PG dental education in providing care to patients with special health care needs, 26% of dentists have given a score of 3 and 5% of them as 0 on a scale of 0-5.

About 35% of dentists stated that they treat aged patients and 36% of them stated they would treat all kinds of special health care needs patients. Overall, 97% of dentists stated that the management protocol of special health care needs patient is different to that of normal patients.

There are literature reviews which states that large grants were provided to 11 dental colleges in the USA to develop teaching programs for patients with special needs or disabling conditions.^[7,8] Such grants in our country as well would probably help to build intellectual knowledge among our dentist. This would make them more skilled to tackle and deal with tricky situation that they would come across in treating patients who need special care. However, in our study 76% of dentists agreed that they feel knowledgeable while treating patients with special health care needs while 6% of them disagreed.

The lack of preparedness due to inadequate education and training of dentists in treating patients with special needs can lead to the provision of ineffective treatment, which can bring about further complications of oral health problems, thereby increasing the cost burden. Dao et al pointed out that if patients with special needs have limited access to dental care due to the lack of preparedness of dental care providers, it will lead to more oral complications for these patients that will be costly to the government and patients.^[7] in the present study, 89% of the dentists reported that they are unaware of any government programs or initiatives for SHCN patients. Hence there is a need to expose the practitioners to more number of awareness programs that deal to handle patients who need special care.

CONCLUSION

Patients with special needs are likely to experience poor oral health and have limited access to dental care services. This leads to an increase in oral health disease of patients with special needs, if they are not managed well. But however from our study it can be concluded that the dentists belonging to Hyderabad city are confident with their dental education to manage patients who need special care. Their curriculum and dental school ensure an environment that is sensitive in treating such patients. Most of the practitioners showed willingness and enthusiasm to attend CDE and workshops on enhancing their knowledge about special healthcare needs and management.

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