

Awareness regarding Children's Oral Health Care in Parents Residing in Kanpur Dehat and Kanpur Nagar: A Clinical Survey

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Abstract

Background: Oral health care should be given to children at a very early time even to babies who do not have their milk teeth yet. The prevalence of various myths related to deciduous dentition makes it even more difficult for Pediatric Dentists to corroborate. Hence, it is their prime responsibility to create awareness in parents and resolve their queries related to oral health.

Objectives: The aim of the study is to evaluate and differentiate the most enquired questions, other than the chief complaint by the parents of both rural and urban areas in Kanpur.

Method: A sample size of 150 was taken for the study. A questionnaire which consisted of queries by patient's parents, other than the chief complaint was recorded. The data were analysed to find out the most frequently asked questions and myths by paediatric patient's parents in the hospital on daily basis.

Results: Based on the survey conducted, most common questions were evaluated and difference between the queries of parents residing in Kanpur Nagar and Kanpur Dehat were observed.

Conclusion: A pediatric dentist should promote the oral health of children as well as serve as educational resource for parents.

Keywords: Pediatric dentist; urban; rural; myths; queries.

Introduction

Pediatric dentists unquestionably have the responsibility to educate and advocate for a childhood free of pain and dental disease for all children regardless of nationality, ethnicity or socioeconomic background. They also provide extended services to fulfill the needs of special child, including physically, medically and mentally handicapped. Prevention of oral diseases must be the prime motive and should begin if possible, from before the birth, directing the expectant mother. According to AAPD "a child should visit the dentist the dentist within six months of eruption of the first tooth or by age one." [1]

The parents support and involvement in the child's oral health are important in influencing the dental health. [2] Educating parents regarding the importance of deciduous teeth, dental treatment and

preservation of teeth is also very necessary. Most of the parents are anxious about the crowding, unusual spacing and appearance of child's teeth, which we as pediatric dentists believe are self-correcting. In a country like India, there is a wide diversity of people which majorly reside in rural areas, are more prone to false beliefs, myths and taboos. While on the other hand, parents living in urban areas show more interest in their child's oral health. Also, most of the time, we inherit these myths and hand them over to the next generation for example that too much brushing can harm the teeth or that milk teeth do not need care and treatment.[3]

Therefore, Pediatric Dentists should impart dental education, eradicate the irrational beliefs and strive towards resolving parents' queries. The objective of this study is to determine the differences in attitudes

of people from different socio-economic statuses in Kanpur Nagar and Dehat...

Study Design

The present survey was conducted at the department of Paediatric and preventive dentistry, Rama Dental College, Hospital and Research centre, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh with random selection of subjects. A sample size of 150 children under 14 years of age and their parents were included in the study. Out of 150 parents selected, 75 were from Kanpur Dehat and 75 were from Kanpur Nagar. The study continued for 5 months during the period of July through November 2020. A questionnaire was designed which comprised of most common questions asked by the parents. Requisites of the questionnaire to be filled by the parents consisted of: -

- a) Gross idea of what parents think regarding the oral health of their children
- b) Common queries asked by the parents, most of which are myths as considered by us (Paediatric Dentists).
- c) Difference in the questions asked by the urban and rural population.

A descriptive analysis of data was done to find out what most of the parents want to know from a paediatric dentist about their child's dentition.

Results

The response by the parents was awe-inspiring and of all the 150 parents selected, each and every one eagerly took part in the survey. Queries regarding child's oral health were noted, data was gathered and following results were obtained: -

1. Table 1- Questionnaire
2. Table 2- Data gathered from the survey
3. Table 3- Frequently asked questions from Kanpur Nagar
4. Table 4- Frequently asked questions from Kanpur Dehat

A marked difference was noted in the questions asked by parents from Kanpur Nagar and Kanpur Dehat. The most common question asked by the urban population was "How can tooth decay be prevented?" Out of the 75 parents interviewed, 20% raised their concern about prevention of dental caries while the most common question asked by the rural population was "Is it necessary to treat milk teeth as eventually they are going to fall". A comparison of the most common queries of urban and rural population was done, and it was found out that out of the 75 parents interviewed from the rural population, 40% were ignorant towards the maintenance of milk teeth. (Fig 1)

Table 1: Questionnaire

Questions	Remarks
Milk teeth anyway are going to fall, is it necessary to get them treated?	
Does bottled milk cause decay?	
Can breast feeding cause teeth to decay?	
If a child's primary teeth are decayed or poorly formed, will his permanent teeth also be faulty?	
At what age should a child start using a tooth brush?	
Adult teeth are coming in behind baby teeth	
Are children ill when teething?	
My child has broken teeth since birth. Are they normal?	
Can decay be reversed by toothpaste?	
What toothpaste should my child be using and how much?	
What are fluoride therapy and pit and fissure sealant?	
How can tooth decay be prevented?	
At what age should we see dentist first?	
When does the first tooth erupt?	
Which tooth is permanent?	
There is spacing between child's upper front teeth.	
There are white spots on child's permanent teeth	
Should a primary tooth that is lost too soon be replaced with a space maintainer?	
Is thumb sucking harmful?	
What if child's tooth breaks accidentally due to fall of trauma?	
Are X-rays safe for my child?	
Is cleaning teeth with fingers better than cleaning with a toothbrush?	
Does extraction of upper teeth impair eyesight and vision?	
Pregnancy is not a good time to visit dentist.	

Table 2: Data gathered from the survey

Questions	Responses (%)
Milk teeth anyway are going to fall, is it necessary to get them treated?	42
Does bottled milk cause decay?	8
Can breast feeding cause teeth to decay?	4
If a child's primary teeth are decayed or poorly formed, will his permanent teeth also be faulty?	24
At what age should a child start be using a tooth brush?	6
Adult teeth are coming in behind baby teeth	18
Are children ill when teething?	8
My child has broken teeth since birth. Are they normal?	16
Can decay be reversed by toothpaste?	30
What toothpaste should my child be using and how much?	10
What are fluoride therapy and pit and fissure sealant?	2
How can tooth decay be prevented?	34
At what age should we see dentist first?	7
When does the first tooth erupt?	4
Which tooth is permanent?	6
There is spacing between child's upper front teeth.	30
There are white spots on child's permanent teeth	12
Should a primary tooth that is lost too soon be replaced with a space maintainer?	2
Is thumb sucking harmful?	4
What if child's tooth breaks accidentally due to fall of trauma?	10
Are X-rays safe for my child?	20
Is cleaning teeth with fingers better than cleaning with a toothbrush?	26
Does extraction of upper teeth impair eyesight and vision?	38
Pregnancy is not a good time to visit dentist.	28

Table 3: Frequently asked questions from Kanpur Nagar

S.No.	Query	Percentage
01	How can tooth decay be prevented?	49
02	If a child's primary teeth are decayed, will his permanent teeth also be faulty?	64
03	Adult teeth are coming in behind baby teeth	56
04	There are white spots on child's permanent teeth	83
05	Are X-rays safe for my child?	74
06	At what age should we see dentist first?	90

Table 4: Frequently asked questions from Kanpur Dehat

S.No.	Query	Percentage
01	Milk teeth anyway are going to fall, is it necessary to get them treated?	62
02	Can decay/cavity be reversed by toothpaste/ medicine?	76
03	Adult teeth are coming in behind baby teeth	44
04	If a child's primary teeth are decayed or poorly formed, will his permanent teeth also be faulty?	36
05	Is cleaning teeth with fingers better than cleaning with a toothbrush?	82
06	Does extraction of upper teeth impair eyesight and vision?	91
07	Pregnancy is not a good time to visit dentist	62

Discussion

India is one of the most religiously diverse nations with each individual/ community free to follow their own rites and beliefs. Due to the prevalence of myths, taboos and ignorance towards primary dentition in rural communities and lack of awareness and busy life styles in urban communities, both respectively lead to poor oral health of their child. Resolution to queries plays a pivotal role in providing empathetic and child centred care. Hence, communication among parents, dentists, and the child builds trust and confidence that last a lifetime. [4-6]

In the present study, 42% of the parents interviewed asked that since milk teeth will eventually fall, is it necessary to get them treated. These results are consistent with another study conducted by

Bahuguna et al. according to which 65% of the caregivers believed that primary teeth need not be treated.[7] there was a marked urban and rural variation in the results. About 62% of the parents from the rural population and 20% from the urban population had the query.

Tooth decay by the parents, is considered a reversible process and can be reversed by some medicine or toothpaste.⁹ in the present study, 30% of the parents including both rural and urban had the same view.

“How tooth decay can be prevented?” was asked by 34% of the parents. Here also, a variation was observed between the two groups. About 49% of the urban population asked the same, while only 6% of the rural population showed interest in the prevention of caries.

Myths related to teething are most common. In this study, about 8% of the parents asked whether children are ill during teething. The result was different from a previous study done by Nasir et al. in 2014 which proved that 65% of the parents think that children are ill during teething.[3]

About 20% of the parents were worried about the spacing between maxillary central incisors during the ugly duckling stage. This finding was much less than a previous study done by Levy et al. [8]

Oral hygiene of the subjects is not only related to their low socio-economic status but also to other factors such as lack of awareness, availability of any nearby dentist, anxiety and inconvenience in transport. The prime responsibility of parents is to pursue health related necessities of their children and failure to do so is considered as child dental neglect. Parents usually believe that it's not worth to spend time/money in treating teeth that would fall off. Even in urban populations, most parents seek Dentists for curative and not preventive treatments. A marked difference in the attitude of parents in urban and population is the spotlight of this study.

As a paediatric dentist, we should ease the parents by clarifying their doubts regarding child's oral health and eradicate myths and taboos prevalent in the society. This can be done by conducting dental health education programs and one-on-one interactive sessions with the patients and parents as well.

Conclusion

A developing country like India is facing countless challenges in rendering oral health needs and we, as paediatric dental health care professionals, need to create awareness and instil a positive attitude and behaviour in accomplishing the treatment in a desired manner. The services that are rendered to the child

must be focussed from the point what is best for the child at that moment and also for the adult into whom the child will eventually grow.

In the present study a positive relation was observed among people with different socio-economic status. Both their parents felt free to answer to the questionnaire and had most of their queries solved. A communication bridge was established that helped us know about the prevalent myths and taboos in the society. This reciprocal relationship builds trust between the Paediatric dentist and the parents. However, further studies are required to have an idea of the possible queries of parents residing in industrial and remote areas about the oral health of their children.

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