

Age and Reasons for First Dental Visit: A Cross-Sectional Study of Children in Jabalpur, India

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Abstract

Aim: This study is conducted among the parents/ care givers to assess the attitude and knowledge regarding age and reasons for the child's first dental visit.

Material and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 250 children across randomly selected private schools, private dental clinics, and our dental college in Jabalpur city, India. Socio demographic details and reasons for the first dental visit were recorded using a pro forma.

Results: The maximum number of children reported for their first dental visit was above 11 years of age. Out of which 80% parents reported when their child has pain due to dental caries followed by trauma, irregularly placed teeth, oral habits and bleeding gums were found

to be significant reasons ($P \leq 0.001$). In regarding with the literacy 37.6% and 34.8% parents were graduate and post graduate respectively, they were aware of the necessity for regular dental visits for children but due to their fear and high cost they impede themselves.

Conclusion: Most children had their first dental visit above 11 years of age mainly due to pain. Lack of knowledge, lack of interdisciplinary practices, social and financial barriers seem to have influenced the first dental visit of the children. It is necessary to create more awareness among parents/caregivers and pediatricians and to establish the concept of dental home.

Keywords: Oral habits, Bleeding gums, Interdisciplinary Practices, Dental visit.

Introduction

The first dental visit is a significant milestone in the child's life and a timely visit should be an essential part of the child's general health care. The age of the first dental visit of the child helps in determining the quality of the preventive dental care that the child will receive and thus, the future oral health of the child. Several studies have recommended early dental visits for children, suggesting that it should ideally be before completion of 12 months of age.¹ The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) and the American Dental Association (ADA) establish among their recommendations that 'a child should visit the dentist within six months of eruption of the first primary tooth and no later than 12 months of age. These recommendations are aimed at detecting and controlling the different dental pathologies, particularly dental caries, the oral disease that is prevalent in children which may occur soon after the tooth eruption.² Also these visits enable dental professionals to detect early childhood caries (ECC), assess dental development, guide and motivate parents and caregivers on proper oral hygiene for the child, provide dietary counselling, give information on the risk and emergency management of traumatic dental injuries and motivate parents towards espousing preventive behaviours.³ Parents play a significant role in imparting knowledge, attitude and practice of oral health care in children. There is a low level of positive dental attitude towards pediatric preventive dental care observed in Indian parents. It is a primary social concern to focus on the measures to promote health education regarding early dental visits. Indian Society of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry (ISPPD) has adopted the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) guidelines on FDV and has recommended FDV of children before their first

birthday.⁴ As the oral health of children depends on awareness of their parents, evaluation of need for implementation of oral health awareness programs is important.

Hence, in this study an attempt was made to evaluate and compare oral health awareness amongst parents from different socioeconomic groups and their attitude toward dental treatment.

Aims and Objectives

This study is conducted among the parents/ care givers to assess the attitude and knowledge regarding age and reasons for the child's first dental visit.

Material and Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted across randomly selected private schools, private dental clinics, general practitioners, and dental department of hospitals in Jabalpur city, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Statistical Analysis

Data obtained were expressed as number and percentage and tabulated for statistical analysis. The Chi-square test was used to compare various responses of the study participants for different age groups. The level of significance was set at $P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.001$ was considered as highly significant. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software V.22, IBM, Corp., USA.

Results

A total of 250 parents completed questionnaires and were analyzed. Children were categorized into 8 groups based on age: 0–1 months, 0-6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2–6 years, 6–8 years, 8-11 years and above 11 years. Parents were categorized into four educational groups and seven socioeconomic groups (Figure 1). A greater proportion of children brought for their first visit were in the age group of above 11 years (23%). The most common reason for dental pain was due to teething.

37% of parents know that regular dental checkups are necessary for children as well as dental health does impact on general health but only 26% of parents take their children to the dentist for regular checkup.

Discussion

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that a child should have the first dental visit within six months of age as soon as the first primary tooth erupts and no later than 12 months of age [AAPD, 2018]. The first dental visit aims to prevent ECC and promote good oral health for a lifetime as well as providing preventive dental care education for parents [AAPD, 2014; Poulsen, 2003]. Also, early dental visits prevent the onset of dental anxiety, a phenomenon so widespread in the world and linked to the prevalence of caries, especially in childhood [Cianetti et al., 2017].

It is very distressing to find that dental caries takes toll of health of a child of an age of <3 years which is the budding phase of his life growth. As a matter of fact, owing thereto, preventive measures taken at the early stages hold great significance since it has been observed that incidence of dental caries is high among those who are infected before the age of 3 years.

In the current study we found that majority of the parents (23%) took their young ones to the visit dentist for the first time at the age of above 11 years when encountered dental pain while the least percentage (1%) of parents visited at the age of 0-1 month followed by 0-6 months of age (10%). Literate parents, despite of having awareness about the impact of dental health over the general health, majority of the parents consciously avoid visiting dentist due to fear whereas low socio economic group of parents avoid visiting dentist due to high cost of dental treatment.

Conclusion: It is impartially concluded that majority of the parents were unaware about the appropriate age of

their children's first dental visit. Most of the parents brought their children to dentist after their children experienced pain or suffered from dental caries. There is an ample need to raise awareness among masses regarding the importance of taking oral health care of their children quite seriously at the earliest budding stage of their life.

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