

ORAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND CARE SEEKING IN MEN – A SURVEY STUDY⁺

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Abstract

A study designed to examine issues that affect men's oral health . A noticeable lack of awareness regarding important oral health issues was found , and that 64.5% of the participants did not have regular dental treatment , in other words they visit dentist on need only .

Self – perception of low income , poor oral health and men attitudes had been the significant explanatory factors for not having regular dental care as dental care is expensive and there is a lack of dental insurance in our country .

المستخلص

دراسة أعدت لاختبار النقاط المؤثرة على صحة الفم عند الرجال . لقد وجدنا أن هناك فقدان ملحوظ للإدراك والوعي فيما يخص القضايا المهمة المؤثرة على صحة الفم وأن نسبة ٦٤,٥% من الرجال المشتركين في البحث لا يقومون بالعناية بأسنانهم بشكل منتظم أو بعبارة أخرى يقومون بزيارة طبيب الأسنان عند الحاجة اليه فقط .

انخفاض الدخل وقلة الوعي الصحي الشخصي لدى الرجال كانت من أكثر الأسباب أهمية لعدم قيام الرجال بالعناية المنتظمة بأسنانهم وذلك لارتفاع كلفة علاج الأسنان وعدم توفير التأمين الصحي في القطر ...

Introduction:

Throughout the decades , several researchers focused on human health status , including oral health status . Important differences were found between men and women's oral health awareness [1] . Women attend dental clinics more than men , though there is some evidence that women are more fearful of dental treatment and also precise cost was a barrier to dental care[2] .

This study was designed to examine issues that affect men's oral health and men's awareness of over all health issues that are particularly relevant to them .

Methods :

Subjects : In the year 2006 , a convenient sample of (208) male (21-62 years) old was interviewed to obtain a survey data from men of diverse background , a wide age range of adult men was approached in a variety of settings :

⁺ Received on 2007/8/3 , Accepted on 2008/2/13

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- (1) Waiting halls in consultant clinic of medical technical institute .
- (2) Private dental clinics .
- (3) Dental clinics in the college of medical and health technology .
- (4) Relatives and friends at their homes .

Questionnaire :

A 13-item survey was taken from questionnaire used in researches from other published studies [3,4,5,6] and from oral health literature distributed by federal agencies such as the National Institute of Dental Research [7,8] .

The questionnaire was kept short and put in mind the low – income groups who might be less likely to complete extensive questionnaires or who might feel over – burdened by them , also questions concerning feelings , income and stress in daily life were asked .

Potential subjects were approached , asked for oral consent and gave the questionnaire which was self – administrated on site .

RESULTS :

Table (1) shows the responses to oral health knowledge statements .

Table (1) Responses to oral health knowledge statement

Oral health knowledge statement	No. of Responses	Response		
		I agree (%)	I disagree (%)	I don't Know (%)
There are lots of medications that could cause your mouth to be dry .	208	31.7	14.5	53.8
Lung cancer is the only type of cancer that I know of that can be caused by smoking .	208	44.2	33.6	22.2
Fluoride helps prevent dental cavities in children , but not in adults .	208	21.2	38.5	40.3

While table (2) shows the demographic profile of the participants .

Table (2) Demographic Characteristics of Subjects (N= 208)

1- Mean age (Years)	
41.5	
2- Marital status (%)	
Married	50.9
Unmarried	43.2
Widowed	1.9
Divorced	3.8
3- Have Children (%)	
Yes	53.8
No	46.1
4- Formal Education (%)	
Attend college	53.8
High school	29.8
Primary school	16.3
5- Income Level (%)	
High (More than) 500 000 ID	15.3
Medium 250 000 ID	55.7
Low (Less than) 150 000 ID	28.8

In terms of having specific dentist they visit , 150 (72.2 percent) stated that they haven't specific dentist , while 58 (27.8 percent) have one .

When asked about the length of time since their last dental visit , a significant proportion (64.5%) of the participants answered that they had not had a dental visit as long as 3 years , a significant proportion of them was of low income level (61.5%) , (68.3%) were married and (55%) having children and the majority of them (68.7%) were of low educational level (not attend college) .

Most men surveyed didn't report a routine use of medications , at least one prescription medication had been used by only (35.5%) of the respondents within the last month .

32.6% of the men surveyed reported smoking .

Large proportion of the participants (77.8%) stated that they felt stressed most of the time in their daily lives , stress was significantly associated with low income .

For the oral health awareness of all men surveyed only (31.7%) agreed that there are medications can cause dry mouth while a noticeable proportion of them (53.8%) were uncertain and the majority of them (76.7%) of them where of low educational level (not attend college) .

(33.6%) of the interviewed men disagree with the statement that lung cancer is the only type of cancer that could be caused by smoking while (44.2%) of the men responded to this statement incorrectly and most of them (73%) were of low educational level (not attend college) , while (22.2%) were uncertain .

Of all participants , only (38.5%) correctly disagreed with the statement that read "Fluoride helps preventing dental cavities in children , but not in adults" and most of them (79.2%) were of high educational level (attend college) . While (40.3%) of men didn't know if this statement was true or false and most of them were of low educational level (not attend college) (89.7%) while (21.2%) of men answered in correctly .

Discussion :

In this study , findings suggest a substantial lack of awareness regarding important oral health issues . The fairly high proportion of "I don't know" answers clearly indicate the need for further oral health education of men . Although these groups of men showed some similarities in terms of education and their responses to the awareness questions it is important to note that there are differences in income which had been found to be an important factor of not using preventive measures and seeking private dentist as the results showed that (61.5%) of men whom not having regular dental visit were of low income level and these findings come in agreement with those of American Dental Association [9] and Guay Study [10] 2004 .

Similarly , educational level in this study had been identified as a significant predictor of dental services utilization as (68.7%) of men whom not having regular dental visit were of low educational level (not attend college) and this result comes in agreement with those of Gilbert and Gibson study [3] .

However , this study found that income was not a strong predictor of having regular dental care , perceived need is considered the most powerful predictor of dental care utilization and these findings come in agreement with those of Gilbert and Gibson study [3] , Gift and Newman [11] , and Macek and Cohen [12] .

A significant proportion of participants (32.6 percent) were smoker and the majority of them were among thirties of age . These findings indicate the need for more education concerning smoking and cancer especially oral cancer for men in our country .

In this study 40.3 percent of the respondents did not know the answer to a question about a corner stone of modern dentistry which is the ability of fluoride to prevent and reverse caries in people of all ages . Although this result is similar to those found in Gift and Corbin ^[5] study , this study shows the need for continued education of the public .

Xerostomia is the most commonly reported oral side effect of medications [13,14] only 31.7 percent of the men surveyed knew there were many medications that could cause this adverse effect , while 53.8 percent did not know about this , suggests the need for additional education regarding the side effects of medications .

Conclusion :

This study of men provides preliminary information regarding issues related to seeking regular dental care .

Reported self – perception of low income and self-perceived poor oral health and men attitudes had been the significant explanatory factors for not having regular dental care .

There is a continued need for dentists to educate patients regarding oral health issues , ranging from the various uses of fluorides in caries prevention to the risks involved with smoking and with the concomitant use of multiple medications .

Additionally , more wide spread oral health promotional initiatives are needed to reach men of all age groups in different areas in the country , so the need for a (National Oral Health Program) must be put in mind for the coming years in conjunction with the hospitals , various dental clinics , social affairs and through the media .

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