

Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Perspectives Regarding Tobacco Cessation Program among Students in Private Dental Institution at Chennai –A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract

Aim: Dentists could play an important role in tobacco cessation counseling. This study is conducted to assess dental professionals' understanding of tobacco prevention and control methods. **Material and Method:** A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted in which a close-ended, self-administered 30 item-questionnaire was distributed among 130 interns at private dental institutions in Chennai. Demographic data, tobacco use status, attitudes toward cessation programs, perceived barriers and counseling procedure was filled by the surveyed subjects. **Results:** About 97.7% of the dental interns agreed their role in helping patients to quit smoking. Though 82.3% enquired all their patients regarding their smoking status, 86.9% of them feared improper follow up. Nearly 85.4% of the respondents believed that the counseling done is effective but only 32% anticipated successful intervention and 21% of them were very confident in conducting it. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that although dentists were aware of their obligations towards smoking cessation counseling for patients but certain factors like lack of time, confidence, ,training ,absence of reimbursement and fear of losing patients were the common barriers for the same. Expansion of armamentarium to include tobacco cessation counseling strategies in clinical practice must be adopted by all dental professionals.

Keywords: Tobacco, Smoking, Dentists, Counseling, Interns, Dental Institutions

Introduction

Smoking is injurious not only to an individual's health; it is a hazard to the public as well. The World Health Organization reports that tobacco is the sixth risk factor out of eight for death of approximately 6 million people every year ^[1]and estimates an increase in the annual death toll to more than 8 million by 2030

^[2]. Families of smokers on an average spend thrice more than non-smokers for illness episodes ^[3]. Owing to its causative role in raised mortality and morbidity it is considered a global epidemic ^[4]. Tobacco related mortality is highest in India with 900,000 annual deaths ^[5]. The Global Adult Tobacco survey conducted in India between 2009- 2010 concludes that among 275 million tobacco users 164 million use smokeless form of tobacco while 42 million consume both forms of tobacco and discloses that 34.6% of the adult population use tobacco in any form wherein, 47.9% males are habitual to tobacco usage as compared to 20.3% females. It has also to an estimation that 1 million people die in India due to tobacco related diseases ^[6, 7, 8]. Numerous studies have recognized the adverse effect of tobacco. Chewing tobacco has led to an increase in the number

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of cases reported with head and neck cancers. Adults are likely to quit smoking when advised by their dentist [9]. Dental professionals have opportunities to educate and help addicted individuals quit smoking [10] and they are in an ideal position to provide cessation counseling program for achieving an increase in the abstinence rate from tobacco consumption [11, 12]. Unless tobacco users are helped to quit, the proportion of deaths would rise substantially in the nearing future and thus our study is carried out with an aim to assess the demographic data, tobacco use status, attitudes, perceived barriers, counseling procedure, perception and experience of dental interns regarding tobacco cessation program in private institution at Chennai.

Materials and Methodology

Nearly 29 dental institutions are located in Tamil Nadu. Chennai is said to be India's health capital providing health care through various Government and private hospitals is the area selected for conducting this cross sectional study. Among the 13 dental colleges in Chennai city within Tamil Nadu, 3 dental colleges were randomly selected. Nearly 130 interns at different private dental institutions constituted the study population.

Questionnaire:

A self-administered structured questionnaire consisting of 30 item questionnaire designed to obtain dental interns' demographic data, knowledge, attitudes, tobacco use status, practices, perspectives and experience regarding Tobacco Cessation program among dental interns in Private Dental Institution was used. The study participants' willingness to take part in the study by filling the given questionnaire and their agreement for response was considered as obtaining implied consent. One hundred percent response rate was achieved.

Statistical Method: Descriptive statistics using frequency and percentage was used. Inferential statistics using Pearson's Chi-square test was done to check the level of significance and association between variables.

Analysis Report:

A) The present study shows **attitude level** among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling. It shows that among 130 study subjects, 99(76.3%) dental interns felt that they require adequate space with privacy to counsel the patients and 112(86.2 %) of them expect support from other staffs for the smoking

cessation program to be effective. About 25(19.2%) of them had undergone training program to handle addicted smokers while 116(89.2%) of the interns were willing for an intensive training course. Nearly 126(96.9%) of them had extended their support for ban of smoking in public places (**FIGURE 1**).

B) The present study shows **perception level** among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling. It shows that 86.9 % dental interns feel that patients might not turn up for the next visit and nearly 76.2% believe that they might not extend co-operation if tobacco cessation counseling is given 92.3 % of them trust that tobacco cessation counseling could be effective when good quality content is used within appropriate time. Only 51.5% of the dental interns are of the opinion that the warning images on tobacco products are effective to discontinue smoking habit. 85.4% of them feel that tobacco cessation counseling is effective (**FIGURE 2**).

C) The present study shows **practice level** among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling. It shows that among 130 study participants, 107(82.3%) of them ask all their patients regarding smoking status, 45(34.6%) of them provide pamphlets and books on staying tobacco free, 118(90.8%) explain patients all the health risks due to smoking, only 42(32.3%) make use audio visual aids and 38(29.2 %) make use of electronic gadgets to remind patient enable them quit smoking. It also reveals that 78(60%) of the dental interns are properly document records about tobacco users and 36(27.7%) of them refer smokers to de-addiction centers. Out of the total, only 35(26.9 %) prescribe nicotine substitutes for their patients .About 15 (11.5%) dental interns are smokers currently (**FIGURE 3**).

D) The present study shows the frequency, follow up of tobacco cessation counseling given and financial concerns to it. It shows that 37(28.5%) of the dental interns have given tobacco cessation counseling regularly while 86(66.2%) of them provide only at times whenever time permits and 7(5.4%) do not take up at all. Hardly 48(36.9%) of them had followed up for every case routinely and 64(86.2%) have reported that it is only done sometimes. 18(13.8%) of the dental interns do not follow up at all. About 43(33.1%) of the study population is concerned on financial reimbursement usually when they start the counseling session while 70(53.8%) considers it only occasionally.

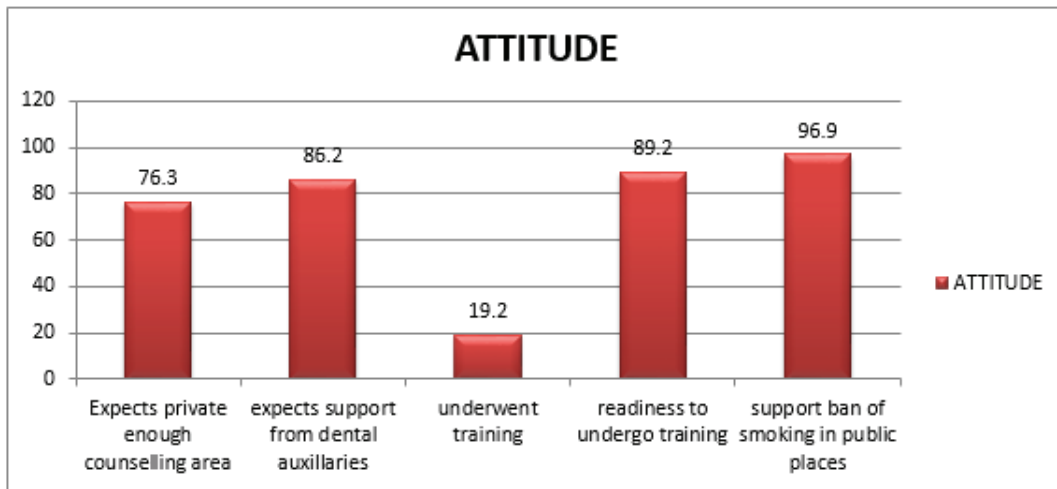


Figure 1: Assessment of attitude level among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling.

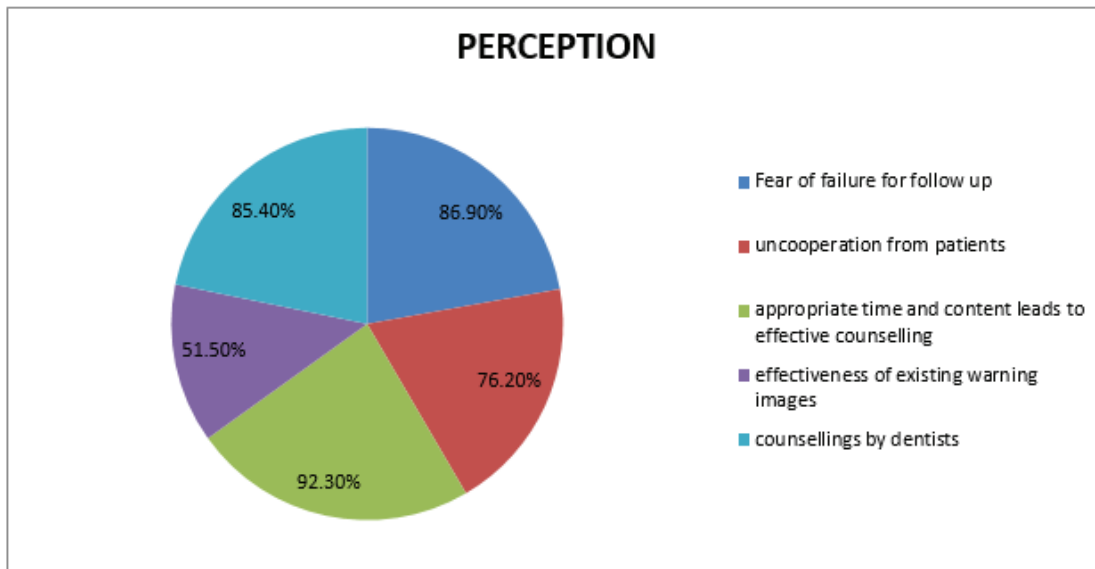


Figure 2: Assessment of perception level among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling.

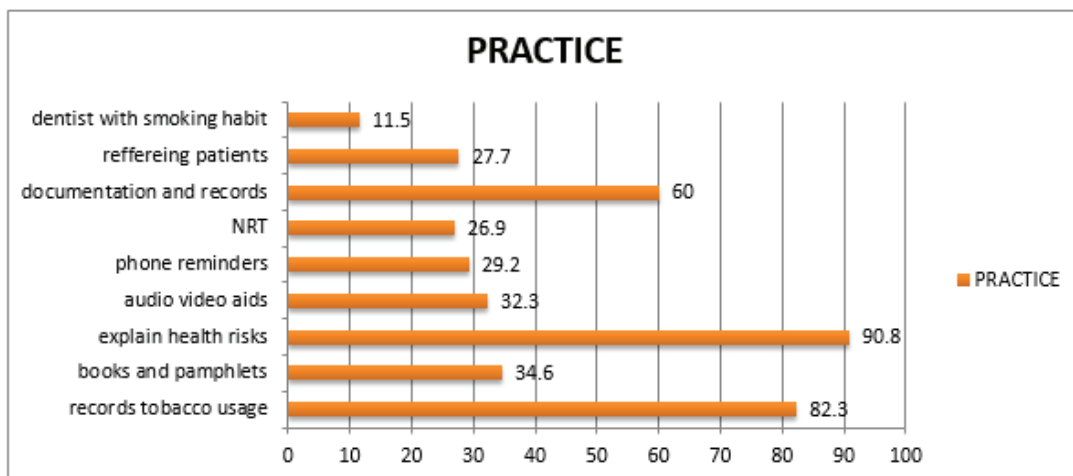


Figure 3: Assessment of practice level among dental interns regarding tobacco cessation counseling.

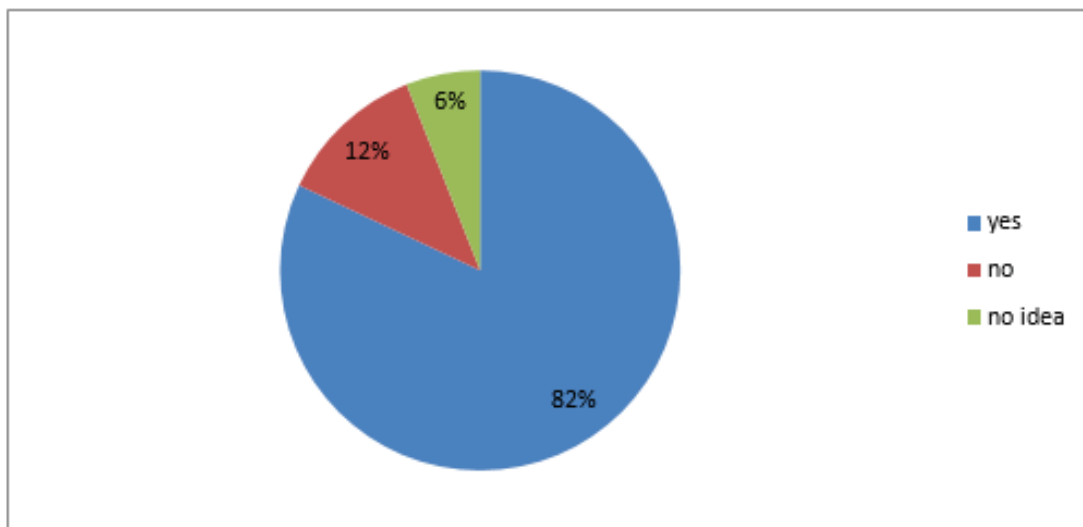


Figure 4: Knowledge about cotpa (cigarettes and other tobacco products act) among dental interns

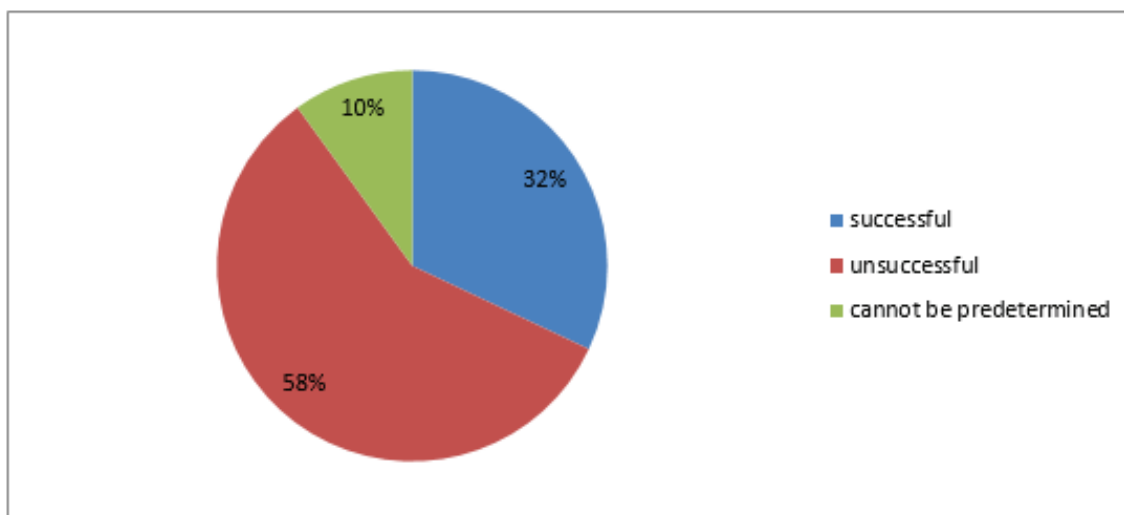


Figure 5: Anticipated outcome of tobacco cessation intervention

Discussion

As health professionals play a vital role in enriching health of the society and dentists are in a better position to spend more time with patients. Around 97.7% participants in this study similar to previous studies feel that it is the moral and ethical responsibility of every dentist to conduct tobacco cessation program with provision of encouragement and motivation for patients to quit use [13, 14]. 82.3% of them routinely ask their patients about tobacco use. The role and responsibility of dental professionals in serving as role model for the community in adaptation of healthy life style is accepted by majority of the interns (86.9%).

Merely 75.4% were found to be confident that they are qualified to counsel smokers. In our study, not all participants reported that they were taught how to counsel smokers and the above findings may be explained by the fact that only 19.2% had undergone training program to conduct counseling. On the other hand 80.9% constituting a massive proportion of our study group have not underwent such training despite the fact that 89.2% show readiness to accept such intense course. About 72.3% revealed awareness regarding behavioral modification while only 50% were familiar with avocation of pharmacological intervention as well. Though 50% were aware of NRT (Nicotine replacement therapy) and 73.1% were not advising at all for patients while 26.9 % prescribed NRT in practice.

As far as knowledge about COTPA (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act) is concerned only 82 % believed that their campus has legislative policy against use of tobacco while 12% of them have reported that they do not have such regulation and 6 % have no idea in terms of ban for smoking in and around educational institutions (**FIGURE 4**).

Majority of them (90.8%) explained all health risks to smokers but few of them utilized audiovisual aids especially books and pamphlets are offered only by 34.6% intern. Less numbers dentists consisting of 29.2% used their phones to give reminder messages to the patients as well. Nearly 36.9% followed up regularly on their patients to refrain from smoking while 86.2% occasionally tried. Thus the above two factors like knowledge and adequate training contributes as requisites for a successful tobacco intervention which influences the outcome of this study. The role and responsibility of dental professionals in serving as role model for the community in adaptation of healthy life style is accepted by majority of the interns (86.9%). These findings are in consistent with other surveys having the nearly same purpose conducted in the various countries across the world [2, 15, 16, 17].

According to various Indian studies, most doctors did not ask for or suggest methods to quit tobacco [15, 16]. Similarly, in our study also only a minority of the interns actively participated in tobacco intervention services. About 11.5% of the dental interns used tobacco contrary to 22% and 14.2% in other studies, which is high, and a cause for concern [9]. (**FIGURE 5**) About 97.7% participants in this study feel that it is the moral and ethical responsibility of every dentist to conduct tobacco cessation program with encouragement and motivation for patients to quit use, which is in close agreement with the other studies [18, 19]. This is similar to the earlier study on dental students who had also favored a ban on public use and on sale of tobacco products to adolescents [20].

Conclusion

Dental professionals play a significant role in tobacco cessation at clinical and community levels as well. The need of the hour is to train them for successful achievement of the goal of "Tobacco Free Society." Immense efforts are needed to motivate and empower the doctors to actively engage in smoking cessation support. It is high time to fight against tobacco on ground level.

Hence active participation of dedicated dentists with sincerity should be encouraged.

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