



PATIENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS DENTAL TABOOS

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INTRODUCTION

Taboo is a Tongan word which mean forbidden. It is usually found among a certain society. Each society has its own taboo, and they stand out from one another. Those taboos are handed down from one generation to another. (1) There are many types of taboos, even in the medical field. Medical taboos are a little peculiar as they cause it society to believe that diseases are supernatural curses on the victim. Like medical taboos, dental taboos also exist. (2) Those taboos have influenced the society on a whole new level and that has caused the people to not visit the dentist when they experience a toothache. (3)When the people are credulous in their beliefs, less importance will be given to oral care. (4) That will lead to unnecessary pain and extent like gingivitis and dental carries. (5,6) For this purpose, a study has been done to investigate the attitude of patients towards dental taboos in Chennai. (7,8,9) The main purpose of this study is to assess dental misbeliefs among patients in Saveetha Dental College and suggest possible measures of correcting those misbeliefs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in Saveetha Dental College, Chennai. In my study, I have selected the participants in a meticulous manner. The participants were chosen based on their ability to read and understand English as the questionnaire is written in English. The people who were not able to read and understand English were not chosen to participate in this study. Before handing out the questionnaires, a consent form was distributed to the participants for research requirement purposes. A survey was then taken by distributing a set of 13 questions in a formatted questionnaire, among the selected patients of Saveetha Dental College.

The personal information collected were name, age and gender of the patient. Subsequent questions were to evaluate the effect dental taboos versus oral health knowledge. The patients were asked to answer a predesigned questionnaire as seen in table (1). It required them to answer 13, yes or no questions related to dental taboos and their opinions about it. The data was then collected and tabulated for further investigation.

Table 1 Questionnaire on dental taboos that was given to the patients of Saveetha Dental College.

NAME OF PATIENT	AGE/SEX
QUESTIONS	
1. Does your teeth become looser after cleaning?	Yes/No
2. Does the extraction of the upper tooth have any side effects to one's eyesight?	Yes/No
3. Is it necessary to visit the dentist before the eruption of your primary teeth?	Yes/No
4. Are regular dental appointments necessary?	Yes/No
5. Does the space between your teeth bring you good luck?	Yes/No
6. Would you rather use your fingers to clean your teeth, rather than using a toothbrush?	Yes/No
7. Do you agree that you should stop brushing your teeth after your gums bleed?	Yes/No
8. Are artificial teeth better than repairing the impacted teeth?	Yes/No
9. Does raw birral blocken your teeth?	Yes/No
10. Are teeth that appear white, stronger?	Yes/No
11. Are cloves and sugar your choice for pain reduction at the tooth?	Yes/No
12. Do you believe that the tooth that has fallen, should be thrown on the rooftop?	Yes/No
13. Is it your belief that the possession of teeth at birth are bad omen to the grandfather?	Yes/No

RESULTS

The total number of participants in this survey was 105 people.

The study population was distributed according to various categories.

They include

Tabular representation of different age groups of male and female (table 2)

- 56 people were male
- 49 people were female

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Table 2 sample chart

age group (years)	male	female	total number
10 to 20	8	9	17
21 to 30	13	11	24
31 to 40	16	13	29
41 to 50	11	14	25
50 and above	3	7	10

Graphical represent of the prevalence of positive and negative response for all 13 questions in the questionnaire (figure 3)

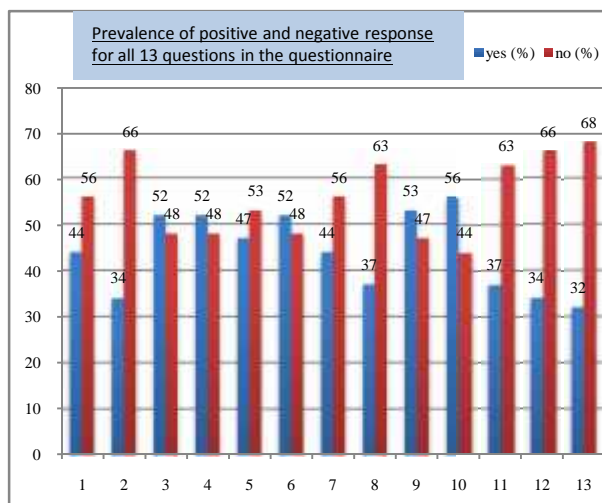


Figure 3

DISCUSSION

This research was conducted to assess the attitude of patients in Saveetha Dental College, towards dental taboos and suggest possible measures to correct those misbeliefs. A predesigned questionnaire was handed out to 105 dental patients from Saveetha Dental College. In that 105 people, 56 people were males and 49 others were females. From the questionnaire we can draw a conclusion which says, the maximum number of people who said yes for this survey was 56 who agreed that teeth which appear whiter are stronger. In the article published by Humphris GM, Morrison T, Lindsay SJ, the maximum number of people agreed to the existence dental taboos. The most popular dental taboo in his article was the extraction of the upper tooth will affect the brain. (10) The minimum number of people who said no for this survey is 32 who disagree that the possession of teeth at birth is a bad omen to the grandfather. The mean value for the number of people who answered yes is 44.13333 and the mean value for the people who answered no is 55.86667. The study conducted by Johansson P, Berggren U, Hakeberg M, Hirsch J-M (11), also concluded that the number of people who are still blinded by dental misbeliefs are higher than the people who don't believe in them. In a nutshell, many people are still unaware of dental taboos and its absurdity. This will only cause more dental problems for the individual. Therefore, dental taboos should be extracted from the minds of others to ensure the continuity of proper oral health and hygiene.

CONCLUSION

Everyone comes from a different family background with their own myths and beliefs. The individual can either learn from it or choose to believe it without a second thought.

There are recent studies which prove that most of the misbeliefs are merely misbeliefs and should be corrected to ensure the oral health of the community. (12, 13) There are certain measures that can be taken to prevent the number of people who believe in dental taboos from increasing. More awareness campaigns should be carried out to educate the public about the importance of proper oral health. (14, 15) School children should be exposed to proper oral care at an early age to nip the problem in the bud. Mass media should also play its role in spreading information as quickly and to as many as possible. (16, 17) The public should be educated about the importance of good oral health and prevent dental taboos from becoming facts.

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