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ABSTRACT:

INTRODUCTION: Oral health is considered as an integral component of overall health. Therefore, the preventive and therapeutic oral health care should be accessible to all the children and youth. Pediatricians examine infants several times during their 1st and 2nd years of life. Parents usually seek Pediatricians' advice in securing their child's normal growth and development. Pediatricians must have proper knowledge in addition to time and inclination to educate the parents.

AIM: To determine and assess the knowledge and awareness regarding oral health care & dental treatment among Pediatricians.

MATERIALS & METHOD: A total of 60 pediatricians, practicing in Ahmedabad City registered under the Indian Medical Association were selected for the study. A Google form was prepared based upon the validated objective questionnaire, and was circulated among the pediatricians and they were requested to fill the questionnaire.

EVALUATION: Evaluation was done based on the answers of the Google form.

RESULT: In our study it was observed that most of the pediatricians were aware of Pediatric Dentistry as a specialty but not all of them make referrals to a Pediatric Dentist. A few of the Pediatricians agreed that the dental caries is infectious disease to the child and it was observed that a 60% of the pediatricians believed that the diet counseling to be effective in reducing caries. So that the more communication between medical and dental societies is needed to improve the status of infant OHC (Oral Health Care). **Conclusion:** Pediatricians who participated in this study had a fair knowledge regarding dental and oral health as well as treatment needs but still there's a need to improve the Pediatrician's knowledge and awareness about the oral health and dental treatment needs in children.

KEYWORDS: Pediatricians, Oral health care, 1st dental visit

INTRODUCTION

Oral health is an important part of overall health, good oral health contributes positively to the physical, mental and social well-being of infants and to the full enjoyment of their lives by allowing them to speak, eat and socialize without experiencing pain, discomfort or embarrassment. The preventive oral health process among infants must begin early, i.e. the first year of infancy to ensure a successful oral hygiene.¹

Pediatricians examine infants several times during their 1st and 2nd years of life. Parents usually seek pediatricians' advice in securing their child's normal growth and development. Pediatricians regularly examine most children, at least in their early years. Pediatricians could therefore be the ideal vehicle for advice to parents about the prevention of dental disease. If proper counsel regarding the child's development and eruption of

teeth as well as guidance for the prevention of various oral diseases is rendered at this age, better oral health can be attained for these children.²

To achieve this, pediatricians must have proper knowledge in addition to time and inclination to educate the parents. Thus, pediatricians are considered to be in a unique position to provide preventive information and to diagnose oral diseases in their patients.³

Thus, the present study was done to assess the knowledge regarding infant oral health in pediatricians and to make them aware about the preventive oral health care (OHC) needs for the infants to their parents. Hence, there is a need for increased infant OHC education in the medical communities.

MATERIAL & METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted after obtaining approval

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from the Institutional Ethical Committee.

A total of 60 pediatricians, practicing in Ahmedabad City registered under the Indian Medical Association were selected for the study.

For the study purpose, a Google form was prepared based upon the validated objective questionnaire, and was circulated among the pediatricians and they were requested to fill the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was self-prepared including questions regarding awareness regarding Pediatric Dentistry, importance of early dental visit, fluoride application, dental caries and importance of primary dentition.

RESULT

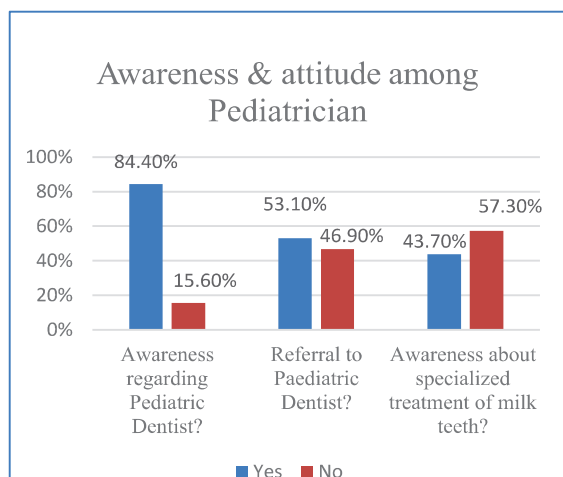
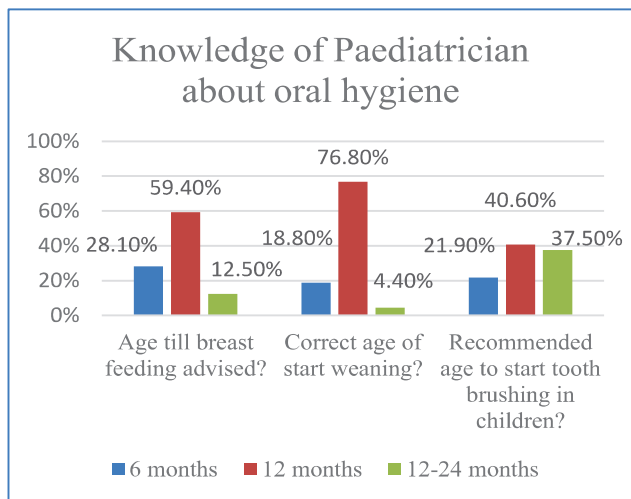


Table 1: Knowledge among Pediatrician regarding primary dentition

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| No. of milk teeth? | 18 (14.7%) | 20 (80.3%) | 32 (5%) |
| Age of 1st primary tooth eruption? | 3-5 months (14.1%) | 6-8 months (67.1%) | 10-12 months (32.9%) |
| Age of 1st dental visit? | 6-12 months (31.5%) | 2 years (46.9%) | 3 years (21.6%) |
| Importance of early dental visit? | Very important (39.3%) | Important (51.3%) | Not at all (9.4%) |

Table 2: Knowledge among Pediatrician about oral hygiene & oral disease

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Use of fluoride toothpaste in children? | 1 year (25%) | 2 years (34.4%) | 3 years (40.6%) |
| Dental caries is a disease? | Yes (18.8%) | No (81.3%) | |
| Do you routinely examine oral cavity & dentition of your patient? | Yes (43.8%) | No (56.3%) | |
| Does caries free child need to visit dentist? | Yes (43%) | No (57%) | |
| Should counselling on prevention of caries be a routine part of health child care? | Yes (78.1%) | No (21.9%) | |
| Do you provide dietary counselling to your patients regarding no cariogenic food? | Yes (59.4%) | No (40.6%) | |



DISCUSSION

Infant oral health care can be defined as foundation on which a lifetime of preventive education and dental care can be built up in order to help acquire optimal oral health into child and adulthood. The allied health professionals as well as various community organizations must be involved for achieving goal of infant oral health care. It was unclear to what degree pediatrician were knowledgeable about oral health and the extent to which they may already been participating in prevention and assessment. Hence this study was undertaken to know the awareness and attitude of pediatricians towards oral health care of children, with the help of a specially designed questionnaire.

In general, the medical practitioners had higher levels of dental knowledge and more positive attitudes than the caregivers. They can play an important guiding role in developing positive dental attitudes. However, in a study, the results failed to show that the medical practitioners conveyed the correct dental knowledge and positive dental attitudes to caregivers.

In our study it was observed that most of the pediatricians (84.4%) were aware of pediatric dentistry as a specialty but not all of them make referrals to a pediatric dentist (53.1%). A study by **Sanchez O, Childers N, Fox L, Bradely E**

(1991)⁴ also reported that many of the pediatricians (63%) recommend patients to a pediatric dentist.

In our study most of the pediatricians (70%) were observed to have adequate knowledge regarding primary teeth and age of first tooth eruption, but there is a diverse opinion among them regarding first dental visit and importance of an early dental examination. 47% of them felt that 2 years of age would be the age of first dental visit although AAPD (American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry) suggest that first dental visit should be within 6 months of eruption of the first tooth.⁵

In this study about 31.5% of the pediatricians recommended the 1st dental visit in 6 months to 1 year as compared to 40% by **Kumari et al (2006)**⁶, 52.5% by **Shivaprakash et al (2009)**⁷ and only 2.7% by **Preeti et al (2006)**⁸.

AAP (2014)⁹ (American Academy of Pediatrician) suggests that pediatricians should advice parents to cease breast feeding after 9 months of age and accomplish it soon after the first birthday. **Koranyi K, Rasnake K, Tarnowski K (1991)**¹⁰ found that most pediatricians tended to recommend later dates for beginning and accomplishment of weaning and were not completely in accordance with AAP (American Academy of Pediatrician) guidelines. It was observed that a 60% pediatricians believed that the diet counseling to be effective in reducing caries. Most of them advised mothers/care givers to limit the sugar intake, both in the form of snacks and drinks.

About 18.8% of the pediatricians agreed that the dental caries is infectious disease to the child. Similar results were observed in the study conducted by **Preeti P, Lawrence H, Harvey B, McIssac W, Hardy L, Leake J (2006)**⁸.

More communication between medical and dental societies are needed to improve the status of infant OHC (Oral Health Care). **Deshpande A, Dhillon**

S, Somanna K, Dave B, Porwal P, Macwan C (2015)¹¹ have done a study on pediatrician with impact of OHC education and concluded that there is a need for provision of education and awareness to the primary healthcare providers which would help in improving infant's oral health status along with the establishment of dental home. Continuing dental education programs for pediatricians have to be done on regular intervals. These measures have to be taken into account so that as a family we can improve the quality of oral health in children.

CONCLUSION

Pediatricians who participated in this study had a fair knowledge regarding dental and oral health as well as treatment needs in children but still the present study emphasize the need of the pediatrician to understand their role in promoting preventive oral health care through referral to the Pediatric Dentists. Following measures may be taken to improve the pediatrician's knowledge about oral health and treatment needs in children: more communication between medical and dental societies and educating them about child's oral health, regular lectures and dental health education programs pertaining to the preventive strategies. The concept of dental home should be included in the postgraduate curriculum of the Pediatrics and Child Health and should be published in medical journals.

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