

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Awareness and Attitude of Parents' Toward Treatment of Primary Teeth in and around Karad City - A Survey

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** The present study was carried out to find the awareness and attitude of parents toward the dental problems faced by their children. Furthermore, an attempt was made to evaluate the oral health awareness and the attitude of parents toward the dental treatment of children of both the sexes.

**Materials and Methods:** A questionnaire based on the WHO questionnaire was formulated that consisted of multiple choice questions and these questionnaires were distributed to the parents approaching the Department of Paedodontics and Preventive Dentistry of School of Dental Sciences, Karad, and also the parents approaching the general OPD of the same institute and hospital.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data were entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 software and analyzed. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed for data presentation.

**Results:** The chief complaint that makes a child visit the hospital is pain. The treatments are carried out by patients, but if the patient has not undergone the required treatment, cost remains the major factor. The next most common factor occurs to be the myth that saving a deciduous tooth which is going to fall off soon is of no importance. No indifference in the attitudes of parents toward the treatment of deciduous teeth of boys and girls has been noticed.

**Conclusion:** There is a need to educate the parents regarding the importance of saving the primary teeth. Karad, being a small town, though has got people with basic educational qualifications still lacks the knowledge regarding the importance of deciduous teeth. The awareness of people and attitude of treating primary teeth are directly co-related.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Awareness, Knowledge, Pain, Parents, Primary teeth.

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## INTRODUCTION

"Health is wealth" as the old adage indicates the importance of good health to achieve a very important point is usually missed in this aspect. Health is not only mere absence of disease but also a complete state wherein the person is physically, emotionally, and mentally sound.<sup>[1]</sup> General well-being is directly correlated to the oral health<sup>[2]</sup> and vice versa. Thus, general health cannot be maintained well with a poor oral hygiene.

Parents can be considered as the people responsible for the maintenance of the oral hygiene of the young wild souls. This is because kids usually lack manual dexterity and skills to maintain the health of the oral cavity. Mothers' oral health knowledge and attitude, in particular, influence the oral health of their children at an early age.<sup>[3-5]</sup> This is because the mother spends more time in the caregiving and protecting the child and taking care of his/her health in young age.<sup>[6]</sup> Karad, a small town located along the banks of the river Krishna in the western part of Maharashtra, shelters population of varied strata. The parents usually are seen to neglect the oral health-care needs of the kids. They are usually seen to bring their kids to the dentists only on disturbing cries of pain. On inquiry, they conclude that their ideas by uttering the deciduous teeth shall exfoliate in few days so saving them with such expensive treatment modalities is worthless. What they lack is the understanding that problems in milk teeth distress the child leading the inability to chew or speak properly along with pain and swelling.<sup>[9]</sup>

Bringing a change in the attitude of the parents is the essential need of the hour. Although numerous strategies to impart education and increase awareness of the importance of the primary teeth are being brought up, it is not enough. Awareness has to play a big hand toward the change in the attitudes of the parents toward the primary teeth.

Therefore, in the present study, an attempt to identify with the awareness and attitudes of the parents' toward the various treatment modalities available for saving the primary teeth is made.

## Selection of Sample

Parents with children of <14 years of age were made to fill a questionnaire which was based on the WHO

questionnaire. 300 such questionnaires were filled and data were collected. Parents approaching the Department of Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry of the School of Dental Sciences, Karad, were approached initially. Later, patients from the regular OPD who had children of age <14 were also made to fill the questionnaire.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A multiple-choice questionnaire closely based on the standardized questionnaire by the WHO was formulated. This questionnaire was personally given to all the parents of the child patients approaching the department and the people approaching the dental college and hospital for various other treatments. The respondents were asked to tick the most appropriate answer from the list of given answers. The printed questionnaire was distributed in the local language (Marathi) for the better understanding of the people.

The nature and purpose of the study were explained, its voluntary nature emphasized, and strict confidentiality assured.

Once the questionnaire is answered, the importance of primary teeth and oral hygiene was explained with the help of an oral hygiene instruction pamphlet.

The filled questionnaire with responses was collected and computed.

## Statistical Analysis

Data were entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 software and analyzed. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed for data presentation.

## RESULTS

A total of 300 forms were collected and computed. Following results were obtained.

Q1. How many kids does the family have?

1	2	3	4
25.33%	55.66%	16.00%	3.00%

Q2. What is the gender of the kids?

All girls	All boys	1Girls and boys
36.00%	22.00%	42.00%

Q3. Educational Qualification of the Parent.

No education	10 <sup>th</sup> /12 <sup>th</sup> pass/fail	Graduate	Postgraduate
14.00%	18.66%	44.00%	23.30%

Q4. What was the chief complaint of your child due to which you had to visit the dentist?

Pain	Swelling	Discoloured tooth	Injury to the tooth
60.70%	30.30%	6.00%	3.00%

Q5. How often do the parent bring the child to a dentist?

Quite often	If required	Not at all
19.00%	78.00%	3.00%

Q6. What treatment modality did the dentist prescribe?

Restoration of the tooth	Pulp therapy of the tooth	Extraction of the offending tooth
23.00%	67.00%	10.00%

Q7. Did the patient undergo the prescribed treatment ?

Yes	No
84.00%	16.00%

Q8. If the treatment was not taken, why was not the modality accepted?

Cost	Deciduous teeth tend to fall off by themselves	The child got anxious as the treatment was being performed
74.00%	23.00%	3.00%

Q9. Does the parent know of the fact that if deciduous teeth are extracted before their shedding periods, the upcoming permanent teeth may have ill-effects too?

Yes	No
58.60%	41.30%

Q10. How does the child clean his/her teeth?

Toothbrush +toothpowder	Toothbrush +toothpaste	Finger +toothpowder	Finger +toothpaste
9.00%	70.10%	13.40%	7.30%

Q11. How many times does the child brush his/her teeth in a day?

Once	Twice	Not even once
87.60%	12.30%	0.00%

Q12. If the toothpaste the child uses consists of fluoride?

Yes	No	Don't know
30.30%	12.60%	56.90%

Q13. Whether the parent wishes to know more about the treatment modalities available for the deciduous teeth?

Yes	No
75.60%	24.30%

## DISCUSSION

As we all know human kids are blessed to have two sets of teeth: Primary or famously known as the milk teeth and permanent teeth. A child is born with no teeth in the oral cavity. As time progresses, the teeth erupt within the oral cavity, which over a period of time get replaced by a newer set of teeth.

The primary or deciduous teeth are important as they:

- Help children chew food easily and properly
- Help children speak more quickly and clearly
- Hold space in the jaws for permanent teeth that are growing under the gums
- Set the stage for a lifetime of healthy smile.

According to the results obtained from this study, pain is the most common complaint followed by the swelling in facial region which makes the patients' parents to bring them for a visit to the dentist. Unlike Western countries where children do visit a dentist on a regular basis<sup>[2]</sup> as a part of preventive practice, parents in India do not always take their kids to dentist often. It has been observed that the educational qualification of the parent has not got much to do with the attitude of the parents toward the treatment and care for teeth of the children. Preventive care is still not emphasized as it can be seen that regular dental checkups are still not a part of general medical checkup as in western countries.<sup>[8]</sup> It is noted that most parents get the child treated off the pain and when the treatment is not done, cost is the reason, not the fact that deciduous teeth are replaced by successors.<sup>[5]</sup> Furthermore, most of the children brush their teeth once a day using a toothbrush and a toothpaste. Even though most of the parents opt toothpastes for cleaning of the teeth, they lack knowledge about fluoride and its anticariogenic properties. A similar study held in Kashmir also concluded saying majority of mothers, around 97%, did not know the importance of fluoride.<sup>[10]</sup> No particular difference was noted in the attitude toward treatment of dental problems seen with children of both the sexes.

As parents are the primary caregivers of their children, they should have knowledge about the primary teeth, its health and preventive methods of various oral diseases to build confidence in their children.<sup>[7]</sup> Parents who believed primary teeth are important had children with significantly less decay.<sup>[11]</sup> Positive response toward the learning of newer aspects of saving a deciduous tooth has been shown by majority of the parents. Oral health knowledge, attitude, and behavior of parents help in shaping of the oral health behavior of their children.<sup>[12]</sup> To induce interest among the common people toward the prevention and care of deciduous teeth, following aspects must be dealt with:

- Proper education and awareness programs must be conducted.
- Schools in association with dental units must carry out programs to educate both children and parents.
- Oral hygiene in general and preventive aspects in specific must be emphasized.
- Street plays, free campaigns, and free oral health checkups must be arranged.

- Pamphlets containing oral hygiene instructions must be printed and distributed along with the proper demonstrations.
- Active participation of people is required for bringing out of the awareness among the people.

## CONCLUSION

The mouth is the gateway to good health.<sup>[2]</sup> A healthy body and a healthy mouth can be very well correlated. As children are incapable of maintaining a good oral hygiene themselves, the parents must actively participate in learning newer techniques to inculcate healthy oral habits and approach the dentists at early stages of damage. There is a need to educate the parents regarding the importance of saving the primary teeth. Preventive and curative aspects of pediatric dentistry are to be emphasized.

Karad, being a small town, though has got people who have basic educational qualification still lacks the knowledge regarding the importance of deciduous teeth. The awareness of people and attitude of treating primary teeth are directly correlated. With an increase in the awareness, a change in the attitude can be expected, and with the change in the attitude, a healthier community can be brought to life. Quite a satisfactory number of parents wish to know more about the primary teeth and their treatment options.

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