

Dental care satisfaction among patients attending health care facilities in Dhanbad City, Jharkhand State, India.

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the study was to assess the level of dental care satisfaction among patients attending health care facilities in Dhanbad city, Jharkhand State, India. The data for the study was collected through a questionnaire, which was distributed among 233 randomly selected subjects from dental care seekers attending health care facilities, who had undergone some kind of dental treatment earlier. The assessment of dental care satisfaction was made after analyzing the responses with respect to the various factors, viz., pain management, quality of care, availability, cost and access.

The overall dental care satisfaction was 53.28% among the study group. The level of satisfaction corresponding to individual factors was: pain management (29.04%), quality of care (67.31%), availability (61.9%), cost (41.07%) and access (60.94%). It was hearty to note that 87.59% subjects ensured that the dentist held a valid degree before taking any treatment. It was surprising to note that only 5.57% of the subjects felt that there was further scope for improvement in the existing dental care services. A majority (81.13%) of the subjects were satisfied with the overall work of their dentist. Around 57.51% subjects skipped their dental appointments due to the fear of pain and around 40.77% subjects expressed that waiting for long hours at the dentist's office was bothersome.

The study indicated that the population was less satisfied with regard to pain management and cost of treatment. However, a majority of the subjects were satisfied with the quality of dental care that they received.

Key words: dental care; satisfaction; questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

Many studies have demonstrated that patients who visit the dentist are generally satisfied with the care they receive.¹ However, satisfaction is a multi-dimensional concept and is dependent on multiple factors.² It is also shown that patient satisfaction has an influence on the general compliance and, in turn, treatment quality.³

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Understanding the factors related to dental care satisfaction may perhaps, have a profound effect on the delivery of care and also on the interventions aimed at increasing the utilization of dental care.⁴

Patient satisfaction and dissatisfaction both have a significant impact on the success of any dental practice. Ensuring highly satisfied patients would be a worthwhile task for all dental service providers.⁵ Studies have indicated that dissatisfaction with the way patients were handled by their dentists was quite often the reason for changing dentists (6). With a view to gain further knowledge about the various factors affecting dental care satisfaction, the present study was undertaken.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of dental care satisfaction among the patients attending health care facilities in Dhanbad city, Jharkhand State, India with the help of a questionnaire.
2. To suggest suitable recommendations to the concerned authorities for ensuring provision of quality dental care.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A sample of 233 subjects, who had previously undergone some kind of dental treatment, either at a private dental clinic or at the Government hospital and / or Nursing Home, was randomly selected from the dental care seekers attending health care facilities. A close-ended bi-lingual (English and Hindi) questionnaire containing 20 dichotomous questions (Table 1) was administered to the study group. Individuals who had undergone any dental treatment earlier were asked to fill up the questionnaires.

The dental care satisfaction questionnaire was believed to measure opinions and attitudes of the patients towards dentistry and to assess the level of satisfaction for dental treatment received by them. The questionnaire assessed five factors, viz., access, availability, cost, pain management and quality of care.

The data were analyzed for positive and negative responses. The satisfaction level for individual factors (Figure 2) was evaluated and the mean value of all factors was calculated to arrive at the overall dental care satisfaction.

RESULTS

A total of 233 subjects participated in the study. The overall dental care satisfaction was calculated to be 53.28% among the subjects (Figure 1), with higher satisfaction levels seen with reference to availability (61.9%), quality of care (67.31%) and access (60.94%). However, the factors, cost of service (41.07%) and pain management by the dentist (29.04%) lagged behind (Table 2). It was surprising to note that only 5.57% of the subjects felt that there was further scope for improvement in the existing dental care services. Around 66.51% subjects felt that the dentists were meticulous in their work and around 36.05% subjects expressed their view that dental care services were expensive.

A majority (81.13%) of the subjects were satisfied with the overall work of their dentist. An equal majority (78.11%) of the subjects acknowledged that their dentist accommodated them for treatment at their convenience and were equally happy (93.06%) that they could get an appointment easily in times of a dental emergency. It was a matter of concern that 57.51% subjects skipped their dental appointments due to the fear of pain and around 40.77% subjects expressed their view that waiting for long hours at the dentist's office was bothersome.

Around 64.8% subjects reported that there were adequate number of dentists available in their area and an equal number (63.09%) reported that the dentist could manage all the dental problems. A majority of the subjects (86.26%) reported that the procedure and cost of the treatment was explained in prior by the dentist and 66.52% subjects reported that the dentist educated them about oral health during their visits. It was hearty to note that 87.59% subjects ensured that the dentist held a valid dental degree before taking any treatment.

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed an overall dental care satisfaction of 53.28 % among the patients attending health care facilities in Dhanbad city. This finding is in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Skaret E et.al.⁴ However, this was in disagreement with the findings of the study by Ilpa Alvesalo and Yrjo Uusi-Heikkila.⁷ The variation in the result may be due to the difference in the study group chosen and the subjectivity of the perception of satisfaction.

The dental care satisfaction in relation to access was 60.94% and this was similar to the findings of the study conducted by Bamise CT et.al⁸. The dental care satisfaction with respect to pain management and cost was found to be 29.04 % and 41.07%, respectively. The lower level of satisfaction with regard to these factors may perhaps be attributed to the low socio-economic status of the general population of Dhanbad city as well as to a lack of knowledge about dental care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Refresher programs should be organized for the dental surgeons in order to keep them abreast with the latest in the field of dentistry. Sensitization towards patients' felt needs should also be emphasized.
2. The services rendered by the dentists should be made more accessible and patient friendly.
3. The dentists' professional approach to dental care should be amalgamated with empathy and human values for those in dire need of services.
4. Dentists should also focus on soft skills which help in reducing anxiety and fear in patients, thereby enabling better co-operation from the patient for rendering dental care.

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TABLE 1 - DENTAL CARE SATISFACTION AMONG THE STUDY SUBJECTS

Sl. No.	Particulars	Dental Care satisfaction (%)
1.	In your opinion is there scope for improvement in the existing dental care services?	5.57
2.	Are dentists meticulous in their professional work?	66.51
3.	Do you find dental care services expensive?	36.05
4.	Do you find pain as an important factor in skipping the dentist's appointment?	57.51
5.	Does waiting for a long period at the dentist's office bother you?	40.77
6.	Do dentists always respectfully treat their patients?	78.11
7.	Do you think there are adequate numbers of dentists in your area?	64.80
8.	Do you think that dentists should take more care to make dental treatment less painful?	9.87
9.	Do you think that dental facilities are conveniently located for easy access?	56.65
10.	Does your dentist try to treat too many patients at a time?	13.26
11.	Does your dentist educate you about oral health during your visits?	66.52
12.	In an emergency are you able to get an appointment with your dentist easily?	93.06
13.	Do you think dentists are able to manage all dental problems?	63.09
14.	Do dentists usually explain the procedure and the cost before they begin treatment?	86.26
15.	Do you think dentists can take more measures in preventing dental diseases?	26.15
16.	Do you think the dental offices are equipped with the latest treatment facilities?	56.65
17.	Do you ensure that your dentist is holding a valid dental degree before taking any treatment?	87.59
18.	Do you find the dental clinic clean and hygienic?	72.96
19.	Are you satisfied with the overall work of your dentist?	81.13
20.	Does your dentist accommodate you for dental treatment according to your convenience?	78.11

TABLE 2 -FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DENTAL CARE SATISFACTION AMONG THE STUDY SUBJECTS

FACTORS	SATISFACTION (%)
Pain management	29.04
Availability	61.90
Quality of care	67.31
Cost	41.07
Access	60.94
Overall satisfaction	53.28

FIGURE 1 - DENTAL CARE SATISFACTION AMONG THE SUBJECTS

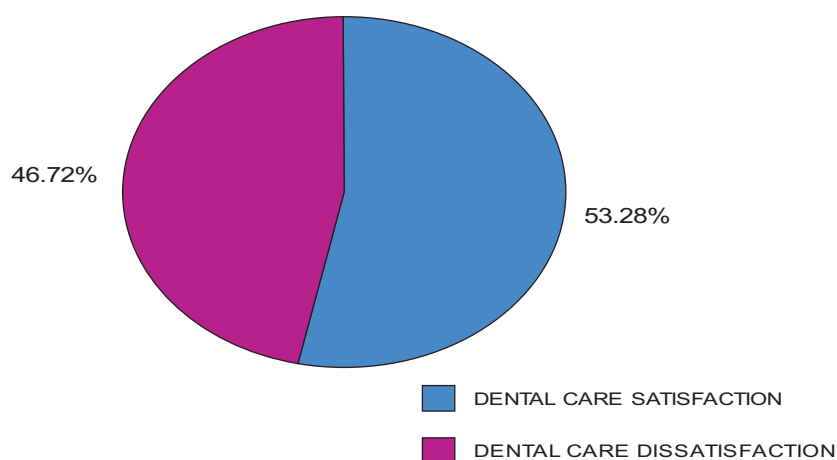


FIGURE 2 - FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DENTAL CARE SATISFACTION AMONG THE STUDY SUBJECTS

