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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## AWARENESS ABOUT DENTAL SPECIALITIES AND TREATMENT PROCEDURES IN DENTAL HOSPITAL SITUATED IN NORTH KOLKATA: A SURVEY BASED STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To determine public awareness of various dental specialties and associated treatments in a tertiary dental teaching institute in North Kolkata. **Materials and Methods:** A 30-item self-administered questionnaire was initially drafted in English and underwent content validation by two dental experts from different specialties. The questionnaire was then translated into Bengali and Hindi by bilingual translators, ensuring accuracy and consistency and back translated for validation. After obtaining ethical approval, the questionnaire was administered among 301 patients respectively knowing their language proficiency. The questionnaire was divided into 10 sections covering demographics (age, gender, qualification) in section A and questions from section B to section J as general dentistry, restorative dentistry, endodontics, orthodontics, periodontics, aesthetics, oral pathology, oral surgery and pedodontics respectively. Data was then collected, tabulated, and analyzed statistically. **Statistical Analysis:** The collected data was imported into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Categorical variables were summarized using frequencies and percentages, and bar graphs. **Results:** The results showed that 49.8% of the population under study are aware about Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, 47.5% of the population are aware of dental filling as a procedure to treat a cavity and 57.5% of population came for dental checkup to prevent cavities and gum diseases. **Conclusion:** Increased awareness of dental specialties can lead to appropriate management and improve the overall perception of dental care. This study highlights the need for this.

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## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary dynamism of the world demands people to be knowledgeable and to keep pace with development. Creating awareness in less acquainted fields is a means by which attitude and understanding of the people can be channelized in a productive manner. The mouth is a mirror of health or disease. Systemic diseases like Diabetes Mellitus, Endocrine and Autoimmune disorders have oral manifestations which develop on the oral mucosa, teeth, tongue, gingiva. Though, currently distinct oral health specialization's (i.e., prosthodontics, endodontics, orthodontics, pedodontics, maxillofacial surgery, oral medicine) are available to combat different oral health problems, the concept of single dentist for all dental problems is still prevalent among general population. A general in difference prevails among the population regarding dental health care. The advancements in technology and education have made dental care to grow with many people who were earlier not very inclined towards maintaining their oral health, have now taken an active role in preventing dental diseases.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Questionnaire:** Initially, a 30-item self-administered, closed and open-ended, pre-structured questionnaire assessing awareness regarding dental procedures was drafted in English and sent to an expert panel of two dentists from various Dental specialties for content validation. Following this, two independent individuals proficient in both English and Bengali performed the forward translation and two other bilingual translators reverse-translated the questionnaire into English, and subsequently the final version of the Bengali-translated version of the questionnaire was obtained. The same methods were followed to obtain the Hindi-translated version of the questionnaire.

**Study design and sample:** This study was designed according to the STROBE checklist for cross-sectional studies. In this descriptive, cross-sectional study; patients visiting the Dental Institution situated in the northern part of suburban Kolkata, were selected by convenience sampling to complete the questionnaires from March 2024 to April 2024. Following this, the printed form of the questionnaire was circulated amongst the target population to

complete the survey after obtaining informed consent following the Helsinki Declaration. The questionnaire was divided into 10 sections which collected the following information:

### Questionnaires

Sociodemographic Data
1.Age
2.Gender
3.Education Level
4.Location*
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding general dental procedures:
Question 1:
What are the main reasons for dental check-up/visiting a dental clinic?
Question 2:
Which of the following dental procedures is typically used to treat a cavity?
Question 3:
What is the purpose of dental X-rays in dental examination?
Question 4:
Which of the following is a common symptom of gum disease?
Question 5:
Are you aware that your systemic condition might have a bearing on your dental treatment planning and that you are supposed to share your medical history with your dentist?
Question 6:
Have you availed any dental treatment or consultation before?
Question 7:
Do you know that there are different dental specialties rendering different treatment ?
Question 8:
If the answer to Q.7. is yes, which of the following are known to you ?
Question 9:
Which subject refers broadly to which kind of treatment ?
Question 10:
Which of the following materials do you think are used for filling of tooth?
Question 11:
Which of the following restorative dental procedures involves the removal of decayed tooth structure and filling the cavity with a material such as composite resin or amalgam to prevent further damage.
Question 12:
Which of the following restorative dental procedures involves using a custom-made tooth colored restoration to cover the biting surface and/or cusps of a damaged or weakened tooth ?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding endodontic procedures:
Question 13:
What procedure is commonly known as a "root canal" and involves removing infected or damaged tissue from inside your tooth to relieve pain and save the tooth from extraction?
Question 14:
when a tooth has an infection that spreads to the tip of its root,what procedure might be necessary to remove the infected tissue and seal off the root to prevent further damage?(Check all that apply)
Question 15:
What is the name of the material used to fill the space inside your tooth after a root canal to prevent bacteria from re-entering and causing reinfection?
Question 16:
If you experience severe tooth pain while chewing or applying pressure to a tooth, what might be a potential treatment to alleviate the pain and save the tooth?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding orthodontic procedures
Question 17:
What is the treatment that involves wearing appliance in mouth that gradually shift your teeth into proper alignment?
Question 18:
If you have crowded or crooked teeth, what orthodontic treatment might be recommended to gradually move your teeth into better alignment without using wires and brackets?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding periodontal procedures
Question 19:
What dental treatment involves deep cleaning below the gum line to remove plaque and tartar buildup and prevent gum disease from

progressing?
Question 20.
If you have lost bone around your teeth due to gum disease ,what treatment might be recommended to buildup the bone and support your teeth?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding aesthetic dental procedures
Question 21.
What cosmetic dental procedure involves applying a thin shell over the front surface of a tooth to improve its appearance ?
Question 22.
If you have discolored or stained teeth and want to brighten your smile and whiten what treatment might your dentist recommend to lighten the color of your teeth?
Question 23.
If you are unhappy with the appearance of your smile due to gaps between your teeth ,with whitish procedure might your dentist recommend to close the spaces and improve the overall alignment of your teeth?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding oral pathology procedures:
Question 24.
What is the dental speciality that focuses on diagnosing and managing diseases affecting the mouth ,jaws and related structures, including oral cancers and precancers?
Question 25.
What procedure might an oral pathologist perform to examine a suspicious lesion in you mouth and determine if it is cancerous or non cancerous?
Question 26.
If you have recurrent mouth sores or lesions that don't heal within a few weeks ,what type of specialist should you consult for further evaluation and management?
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding surgical dental procedure
Question 27.
True or False :Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are trained to perform wisdom tooth removal,complex surgeries to treat facial trauma ,reconstructive surgery after cancer treatment and corrective jaw surgery for misaligned jaws
Assessment of patients' awareness regarding the speciality of Pedodontic(Pediatric dentistry) procedures:
Question 28.
What is the dental speciality that focuses on providing dental care for children
Question 29.
True or false Pediatric dentists are specially trained to provide dental care for infants, children and teenagers and they can also treat patients with special healthcare needs
Question 30.
What procedure might a pediatric dentist perform to apply a protective coating to the chewing surfaces of your child's teeth to prevent cavities?

**Sample size estimation:** The sample size calculation was done based on Cochran's formula (Cochran W.G.1977 Sampling techniques.3rd ed.NewYork:John Wiley and Sons) for infinite population i.e.,  $N = \frac{4PQ}{d^2}$ , where  $P$  is the population proportion (considered here as 0.5);  $Q$  is 1-P and  $d$  is the margin of error (taken as 10% of population proportion). Substituting the mentioned values in the formula, it was seen that a minimum sample size of 301 was required with a Type I error rate of 5%. However, considering the non-response rate, it was decided to circulate the questionnaire to 301 patients.

**Enrolment:** With the approval of the Institutional Ethics Committee (GNIDSR/IEC/2024/52), adults capable of reading English/Bengali/Hindi and who gave informed consent to participate were enrolled in the study. Any dental or related professionals such as practicing dentists, dental students, dental assistants, and other dental auxiliaries were excluded from the study. Forms with incomplete responses were also excluded from the study.

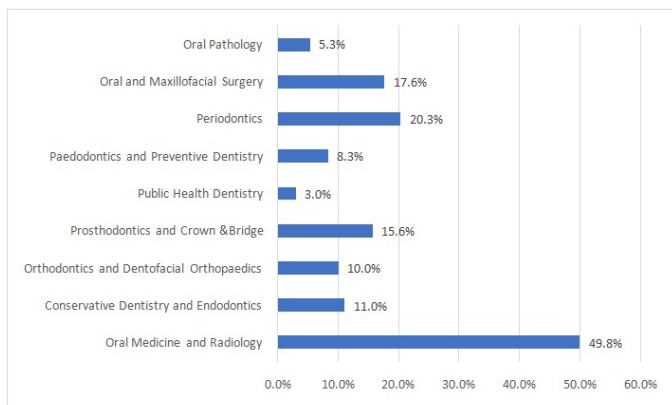
**Inclusion Criteria:** Adults capable of reading English/Bengali/Hindi and who will consent to participate will be included in the study.

Age  
Gender  
Demograph

**Exclusion Criteria**

1. Dental professionals including, dental students, dental assistants, dental technician, dental auxiliary and dentist,
2. People who are not able to fill up the questionnaire
3. Forms with incomplete responses.

**Statistical Analysis:** The data so collected online were imported to Microsoft Excel and further analysed in SPSS version 27 (IBM corporation). The categorical variables were expressed in frequency and percentages. Bar graphs was used to depict the results graphically. As for example-



**Figure 1. Knowledge of study participants regarding different specialities of dentistry (N=301)**

**RESULTS**

**Demographic details:** A total of 301 participants were included in the study. among the participants males are more (n = 169, 56.1%) and in the age group of 35-44 years (n = 81, 26.9%). Regarding academic qualification, 122 (40.5%) were graduates, followed by post-graduates (n = 44; 14.6%). Most of the respondents were from urban area (n = 121; 40.2%), followed by respondents from suburban areas (n = 111; 36.9%), and from rural areas (n = 22.9%). [Table 1]

**Results**

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Age	18-24	53	17.6
	25-34	62	20.6
	35-44	81	26.9
	45-55	60	19.9
	>55	45	15
Gender	Male	169	56.1
	Female	132	43.9
Education	Up to high school	41	13.6
	College	58	19.3
	Graduate	122	40.5
	Post-graduate	44	14.6
	Other	36	12
Locality	Rural	69	22.9
	Suburban	111	36.9
	Urban	121	40.2

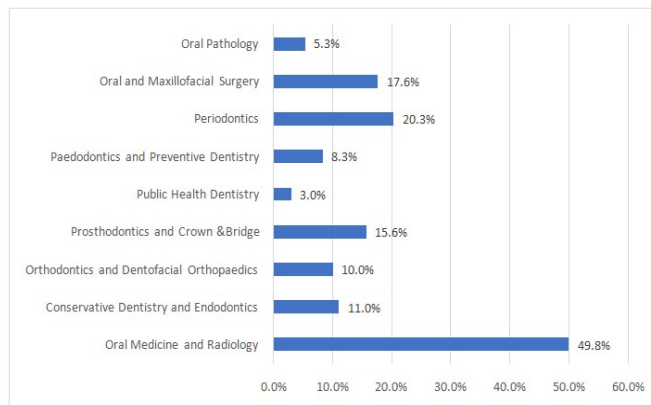
**Questionnaire responses:** In response to the study questionnaire, regarding the knowledge and practices of the individuals regarding dentistry [Table 2], according to the participants, preventing cavity and gum diseases was the most frequent reason of dental checkups (n

= 173; 57.5%), followed by professional cleaning to remove plaque/tartar (n = 112; 37.2%). Swollen or tender gums (n = 111; 36.9%) were the most common symptom of gum diseases, followed by loose teeth (n = 100; 33.2%). Among the respondents (n = 171; 56.8%) did not share medical history with doctor. Most of the respondents availed dental consultations (n = 180; 59.8%). Most of them knew different dental specialties (n = 196; 65.1%). [Table 2; Figure 1].

**Table 2. Knowledge and practices of the individuals regarding dentistry (N=301)**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Reasons of dental checkups*	Preventing cavity and gum diseases	173	57.5
	Professional cleaning to remove plaque/tartar	112	37.2
	Enquiring about dental problem	66	21.9
	Don't know	55	18.3
Common symptoms of gum diseases*	Swollen or tender gums	111	36.9
	Persistent bad breath	81	36.9
	Loose teeth	100	33.2
	Tooth sensitivity to hot and cold	63	20.9
	Don't know	68	22.6
Share medical history with doctor	Yes	130	43.2
	No	171	56.8
Have you availed any dental consultation	Yes	180	59.8
	No	121	40.2
Do you know different dental specialty	Yes	196	65.1
	No	105	34.9

\*The question has multiple responses



**Figure 1. Knowledge of study participants regarding different specialities of dentistry (N=301)**

Regarding the Knowledge of study participants regarding dental cavity and its treatments, according to most of the respondents, dental filling (n = 143; 47.5%) was the most common dental procedure used to treat a cavity. Most of the respondents (n = 117; 38.9%) replied the purpose of dental X-ray in dental examination were to detect cavities, assess bone and gum health, as well as to evaluate the position if wisdom tooth. Majority of the respondents did not have any idea about the material used for filling of tooth (n = 163; 54.2%). According to the respondents, dental bonding (n = 147; 48.8%) was the restorative dental procedure for decayed tooth. Most of the respondents are unaware about the restorative procedure for custom made tooth for damaged tooth (n = 222; 73.8%), the procedures under root canal (n = 109; 36.2%), the procedure to remove infected tissue and seal off root in an infected tooth (n = 146; 48.5%), as well as the material used to fill space after root canal (n = 188; 62.5%). [Table 3].

**Table 3. Knowledge of study participants regarding dental cavity and its treatments (N=301)**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Dental procedure used to treat a cavity*	Dental filling	143	47.5
	Root canal therapy	51	16.9
	Tooth extraction	30	10.0
	Dental crown	12	4.0
	Don't know	65	21.6
Purpose of dental X-ray in dental examination*	Detect cavities	71	23.6
	Assess bone and gum health	42	14.0
	Evaluate position of wisdom tooth	25	8.3
	All the above	117	38.9
	Don't know	62	20.6
Material used for filling of tooth*	Ceramic	22	7.3
	Composite resin	30	9.9
	Silver	85	28.2
	Other material	6	1.9
	Don't know	163	54.2
Restorative dental procedure for decayed tooth*	Dental bonding	30	10.0
	Dental filling	34	11.3
	Pulpotomy	15	5.0
	Root canal therapy	75	24.9
	Dental bonding	147	48.8
Restorative procedure for custom made tooth for damaged tooth	Dental inlay	25	8.3
	Dental on lay	7	2.3
	Dental veneer	19	6.3
	Dental crown	31	10.3
	Don't know	222	73.8
Procedures under root canal	Tooth cleaning	43	14.3
	Root canal therapy	133	44.2
	Pulp filling	16	5.3
	Don't know	109	36.2
Procedure to remove infected tissue and seal off root in an infected tooth	Apicoectomy/ surgical RCT	25	8.3
	Gum cleaning	22	7.3
	Root tip surgery	24	8.0
	Tooth extraction	84	27.9
	Don't know	146	48.5
Material used to fill space after root canal	Composite resin	14	4.7
	Dental amalgam	25	8.3
	Gutta percha	17	5.6
	Tooth cement	57	18.9
	Don't know	188	62.5

\*The question has multiple responses

**Table 5. Knowledge of study participants regarding oral pathology procedures (N=301)**

Procedures	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Dental specialty focusing on diagnosing and management of mouth, jaw, and related structure	Oral pathology	68	22.6
	Dental surgery	44	14.6
	Cosmetic dentistry	16	5.3
	Orthodontics	16	5.3
	Don't know	157	52.2
How oral pathologist examine suspicious lesion	Biopsy	135	44.9
	Dental cleaning	30	10.0
	Dental filling	19	6.3
	Tooth extraction	20	6.6
	Don't know	97	32.2
For recurrent mouth sores which specialist do you consult	General physician	8	2.7
	Endodontist	24	8.0
	Oral pathologist	132	43.9
	Orthodontist	15	5.0
	Periodontics	16	5.3
	Don't know	106	35.2

Regarding the knowledge of study participants regarding oral pathology procedures, most of the participants (n = 157; 52.2%) did not know the dental specialty focusing on diagnosing and management of mouth, jaw, and related structure. Majority of them answered that biopsy (n = 135; 44.9%) is the procedure how oral pathologist examine suspicious lesions. Most of the respondents (n = 132; 43.9%) knew that they should consult and oral pathologist for recurrent mouth sores [Table 5]. Regarding the knowledge regarding surgical, dental procedures and pedodontics among the study

participants, most of the participants (n = 266; 88.4%) answered that it is true that, Oral and maxillofacial surgeon strained for tooth removal, surgery for facial trauma, reconstructive and corrective surgery. According to most of the respondents, General dentists are the dental specialty for dental care of children (n = 156; 51.8%). On the other hand, people (n = 273; 90.7%) knew that, Pediatric dentist trained for infants, children and teenagers and for patients with special need. Majority of the respondents (n = 97; 32.2%) said that, Dental filling is the procedure adopted by pediatric dentist for dental cavity prevention [Table 6].

**Table 6. Knowledge regarding surgical, dental procedures and pedodontics among the study participants (N=301)**

Procedures	Category	Frequency	Percentages
OMFS surgeons trained for tooth removal, surgery for facial trauma, reconstructive and corrective surgery	True	266	88.4
	False	35	11.6
Dental specialty for dental care of children	Pediatric dentistry	77	25.6
	General physician	55	18.3
	General dentist	156	51.8
	Others	13	4.3
Pediatric dentist trained for infants, children and teenagers and for patients with special need	True	273	90.7
	False	28	9.3
Procedure adopted by pediatric dentist for dental cavity prevention	No treatment	9	3.0
	Dental filling	97	32.2
	Pit and sealant application	85	28.2
	Orthodontic treatment	21	7.0
	Don't know	89	29.6

## DISCUSSION

Dental health is an integral part of overall well-being, yet it is often overlooked until the problems become severe. One key factor contributing to this delay in seeking treatment is the lack of awareness about the range of dental specialties and procedures available in dental hospitals. This study aimed to assess the awareness levels among patients regarding the various specialties in dentistry and the treatment procedures they offer. In a similar study conducted by Aloayan et al.<sup>2</sup>, reported that, Overall, the percentage of the participants who correctly answered more than 70% of the knowledge questions was 3.5%. This means that only 3.5% of the participants are considered to have good level of knowledge of different dental specialties, 44.5% had an average level of knowledge, and 52% had a poor level of knowledge. Another study conducted by Shenoy et al.<sup>1</sup>, which was conducted to assess the awareness of general population regarding dentists and their specialties pertaining to their demographic details and educational status reported that, about 84% (68/200) of the studied population was totally unaware of any specialties in dentistry, while 4.5% (9/200) had a vague account for the same. A study was conducted to assess the knowledge of, demand for, and need for the orthodontic specialty in comparison to other dental fields in a sample of Saudi males.<sup>8</sup> According to the study, Subjects' interest in orthodontic knowledge (25%) and demand (27.6%) were not significantly different ( $P = 0.113$ ), unlike the highly significant difference in the need counterpart (62.5%,  $P < 0.001$ ). Hence, bridging this gap through patient education, public health campaigns, and proactive communication from dental professionals is vital for enhancing the overall oral health of the population.

In terms of treatment procedures, 88.4% of patients are familiar with common procedures like tooth extraction, but awareness of more advanced or specialized procedures remains low. For example, endodontic treatments such as root canal therapy, like dental implants, and orthodontic procedures are not fully understood by many patients. This lack of understanding may cause individuals to fear or avoid necessary treatments due to misconceptions about their complexity, discomfort, or cost. Majority of them answered that biopsy is the procedure how oral pathologist examine suspicious lesions. Most of the respondents knew that you should consult and oral pathologist for recurrent mouth sores. According to most of the respondents, General dentists are the dental specialty for dental care of children ( $n=156,51.8\%$ ) On the other hand, majority of the participants knew that, Paediatric dentist trained for infants, children and teenagers and for patients with special need ( $n=77,25.6\%$ ) Majority of the respondents said that, Dental filling is the procedure adopted by paediatric dentist for dental cavity prevention. Various studies have reported poor awareness and knowledge of dentistry in the international population. A study by Oyetola et al.<sup>6</sup> aimed at determining the knowledge and awareness of medical doctors/students and nurses about dentistry. The findings stated that, although a large percentage of the participants claimed to be aware of dentistry, our findings revealed low level of knowledge and attitude to Dentistry.

Efforts should be made towards closing this knowledge gap to achieve efficient oral health. A similar study by Sharma et al.<sup>17</sup> conducted in Nepal also reported similar findings. The study shows that medical professionals had better knowledge of dentistry as compared to medical students and residents. This unnecessary gap between dental and medical professionals can only be fulfilled by including dental education in both undergraduate and postgraduate medical curriculum. In India a study by Mehrotra et al.<sup>13</sup> reported that, the medical practitioners had good knowledge about dentistry.

Similar study in Nigeria<sup>16</sup> also reported that, the knowledge of Medical Doctors about the various areas in Dentistry were not satisfactory.

**Summary of the study:** The findings of this study have several implications for public health and dental education. Increasing awareness through patient education, both in dental hospitals and the broader community, could help bridge the gap in understanding dental specialties and available treatment options. Dental professionals play a crucial role in educating their patients about the various specialties and procedures available to them, ensuring that individuals are informed enough to make timely and appropriate healthcare decisions. While this study provides valuable insights into the awareness of dental specialties and treatment procedures in dental hospitals, several limitations should be acknowledged. As the study was conducted in a single hospital or limited geographical area, it may not accurately represent the general population's awareness across different regions or healthcare settings. Larger and more diverse samples are necessary to generalize findings across various age groups, socioeconomic statuses, and educational backgrounds. While the study assessed general awareness, it may not have adequately evaluated the depth of knowledge about specific specialties or procedures. This analysis would have given a detailed idea about which audience to be targeted for patient educations or public health campaigns. These limitations highlight the need for further research, with more rigorous methodologies, broader participant demographics, and a deeper exploration of the factors influencing patient awareness about dental specialties and procedures.

### Limitation

1. The study may have been limited by the size and demographic diversity of the sample population.
2. The study primarily focused on patient awareness, but it did not include dental practitioners' perspectives on patients' understanding. Incorporating feedback from dental professionals could help identify specific areas where patient education is most needed and how it could be effectively delivered.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while there is a understanding of general dental procedures among patients, significant gaps remain in their awareness of dental specialties and treatment options available in dental hospitals. Bridging this gap through patient education, public health

campaigns, and proactive communication from dental professionals is vital for enhancing the overall oral health of the population. Increased awareness would not only lead to more timely treatment but also improve the overall perception of dental care, encouraging patients to seek specialized care when needed, thereby improving dental health outcomes. A regulated barrier to seek dental care is the attitude itself of individual toward oral health and dentist. Stratification, cultural diversity and educational background of an individual have proven to be important determinants for the observed variation in attitudes. Every scientific field including dental health, is continuously evolving at a rapid rate. In order that this progressing field is proved beneficial to the people; it is mandatory to explore the knowledge level of the population regarding various dental specializations.

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