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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PATIENTS' PRIMARY COMPLAINTS FOR SEEKING DENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES.

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Abstract

Background: Many patients visit dental hospital every day and the reasons for their visit can be varied. While few of them went for regular dental check-up, a majority of the patients visited dental hospital only when they have primary complaints most commonly being pain. Thus, this survey is done to find out the details about patients' dental check-up and primary complaints.

Materials and methods: The data was collected within three continuous working days of the Saveetha dental hospital in the outpatient hospital department. The study sample consisted of 110 people, from the age group of 18-65 years. A self-administered, anonymous questionnaire was prepared in both local language and English version used to accumulate data regarding demographic details, history of dental visit, patients' primary complaints and reasons for not visiting dental clinic.

Results: The study revealed that the patients' primary complaints were toothache which scored the highest about 39%. With the primary complaints, patient would proceed with invasive procedures such as tooth extraction and if possible root canal treatment. If stains were patients' primary complaints, procedures such as scaling can be carried out. Majority of the patients have received scaling as the treatment undergone so far with the least was prosthetic treatment. Patients' primary complaints can proceed with either preventive or corrective treatment.

Conclusion: Data from the study revealed that diverse patients of a private dental hospital had toothache as their primary presenting complaints. There is an essential to mobilize community health approach in order to increase awareness of importance of dental healthcare to encourage regular dental check-up by more preventive treatment rather than corrective treatment.

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Introduction:-

Nowadays, missionaries and nongovernmental organizations in addition to government dental healthcare have provided improved healthcare access especially dental healthcare though there is inequitable distribution. As there is increasing prevalence of oral diseases in government dental healthcare associated with prolonged patient physical waiting-time, thus patients are motivated to seek care in missionary and also private-owned dental health care. There is an evidence that missionary healthcare provides various dental healthcare services to various population as the cost of dental care is lesser in comparison to private clinics. As most of the available studies were conducted

primarily in government-owned dental healthcare, thus there is paucity of information regarding reason of patients for seeking dental care services in missionary hospital (1,2).

People visiting dental healthcare for various reasons. Most of them visited dentist only when there was toothache or follow-up treatment. The reasons can be varied depending upon the current situations. Patients' complaints could be toothache, fractured teeth, mobile teeth, routine dental check-up, follow-up appointment, decayed teeth, stains and others. People went to dentist to solve dental problems and relieve pain.

Therefore, this survey was conducted to study the patients' primary presenting complaints for visiting dental healthcare, dental history and reasons for not visiting dentist.

Materials and Methods:-

The data was collected within three continuous working days of the dental college hospital. The survey was done in the outpatient hospital department. The study sample were patients visiting the department during 3-days period.

The study sample consisted of 110 people, aged 18-65 years. Out of 110 people, 87 people had previously visited a dentist. A self-administered, anonymous questionnaire was prepared in both local language and English version used to accumulate data regarding demographic details, history of dental visit, primary patients' complaints and reasons for not visiting dental clinic.

For those who had previously visited dental hospital were requested to state the time from their last dental visit, reason for it and the treatment received during last dental visit. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to choose from a list, the reason for not visiting dental hospital. The statistical analysis was collected and presented in percentages.

Results:-

The results from the study has shown that majority of people who had previously attended a dental hospital belonged to the age group of 20-40 years, approximately 73%, and majority of the participants who had never previously attended dental healthcare service was in age group of 41 and above.

More numbers of female had visited dental hospital, about 60% in comparison to male participants, 40%.

Table 1:- Sample description by age and gender.

Age	N	Gender	
		Male	Female
Below 20	19	10	9
21-30	47	17	30
31-40	33	15	18
41 and above	11	3	8
Total	110	45	65

Table 2:- Results of survey questionnaire

Questions	Number of patients	
	Male	Female
How many times have you visited dental clinics?		
○ First visit	19	11
○ Sometimes	29	36
○ Frequent	7	8
What is your age on your first dental visit?		
○ Below 20	12	20
○ 21-30	20	21
○ 31-40	17	10
○ 41 and above	3	7
What is the primary complaints of your first dental visit?		
○ Tooth pain	20	16

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decayed teeth ○ Mobile teeth ○ Stains ○ Missing teeth ○ Others 	5 10 19 5 2	8 11 13 1 -
When is your last dental visit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Last week ○ Last month ○ Last year 	10 9 25	14 4 18
What is the reason of your last dental visit (if have)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tooth pain ○ Decayed teeth ○ Mobile teeth ○ Stains ○ Missing teeth ○ Others 	15 3 1 4 9 8	16 9 3 9 2 1
What is the treatment that you received for your last dental visit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scaling ○ Tooth extraction ○ Restoration ○ Prosthetic treatment ○ Orthodontic treatment ○ Others 	10 7 9 3 - 2	18 13 6 1 5 6
What is the treatment that you have undergone so far? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scaling ○ Tooth extraction ○ Restoration ○ Prosthetic treatment ○ Orthodontic treatment ○ Others 	10 7 9 3 - 2	18 13 6 1 5 6
What is the reason for not visiting dentist? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Problem is not severe enough ○ Neglect oral problems ○ No dental problem ○ Treatment is costly ○ Fear of dental treatment ○ Frequent visits are required 	11 11 3 5 7 17	9 4 12 4 18 9
What is your primary presenting complaint for dental visit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Toothache ○ Follow up appointment ○ Fractured teeth ○ Routine dental check up ○ Others 	21 7 11 6 6	26 15 8 6 4

Discussion:-

In this study, more females than males seek dental healthcare services. This result is similar with likely studies regarding oral health seeking behaviour conducted in Southern Nigeria (3,4).

The study results showed that majority of the people visited dentist mostly sometimes, about 60% followed by first visit, 27% and frequent, 14% as shown in Figure 1.

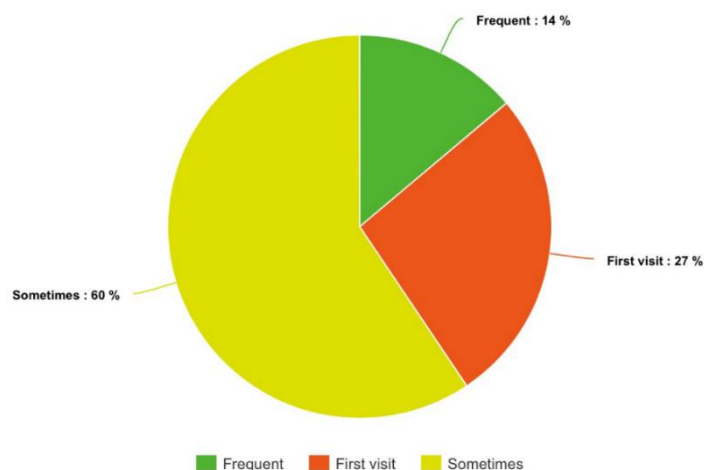


Figure 1:- Frequency of dental visit.

In figure 2, most of the patients visited dentist for the first time at the age of 21-30 and 31-40, altogether contribute approximately 62%. 41 and above scored for the least whose people visited dentist for the first time.

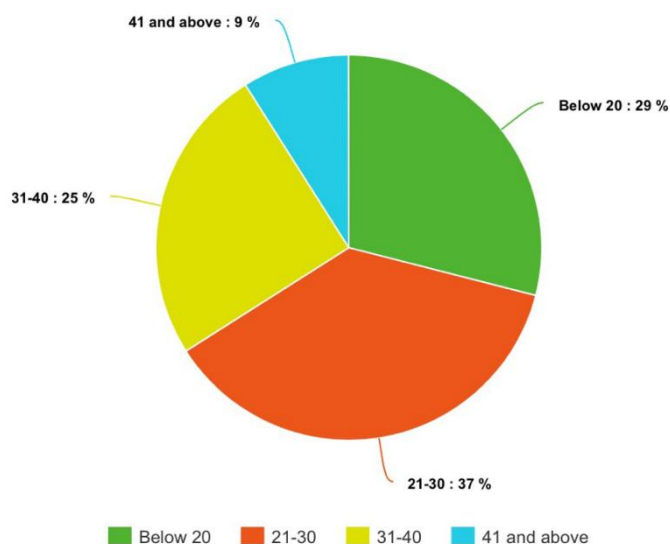


Figure 2:- Age on first dental visit.

The purposed of their first dental visit was tooth pain which scored the highest about 39%. This finding is similar with reports of others studies citing pain as the most likely reason stated by patients for seeking dental healthcare services (1,4). Stains scored the second highest, followed by mobile teeth, decayed teeth, missing teeth and others for the patients' primary complaints. Toothache complaints were primarily due to dental caries and its complications are gingivitis periodontitis, fractured teeth, impacted teeth, and oral ulcers.

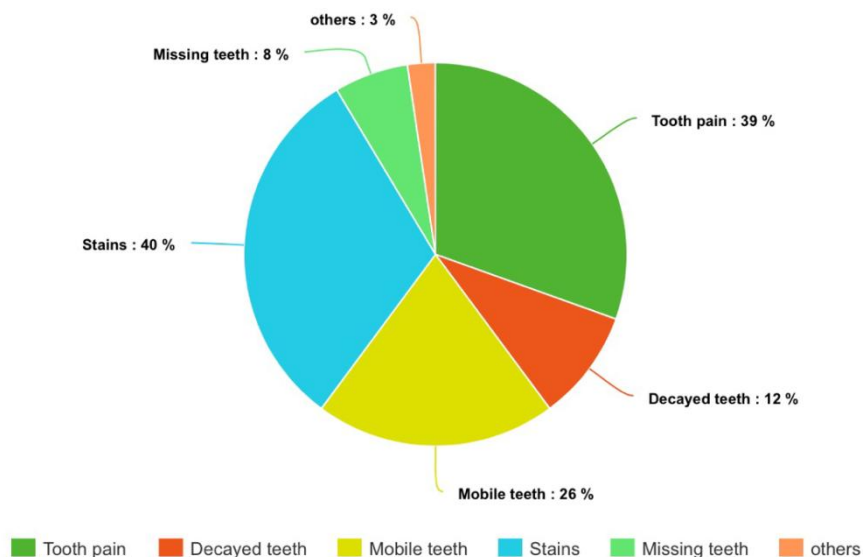


Figure 3:- Primary complaints of first dental visit

Almost 54% of the patients went for last dental visit last year, followed by last week and last month. The percentages recorded by each were 30% and 16% respectively.

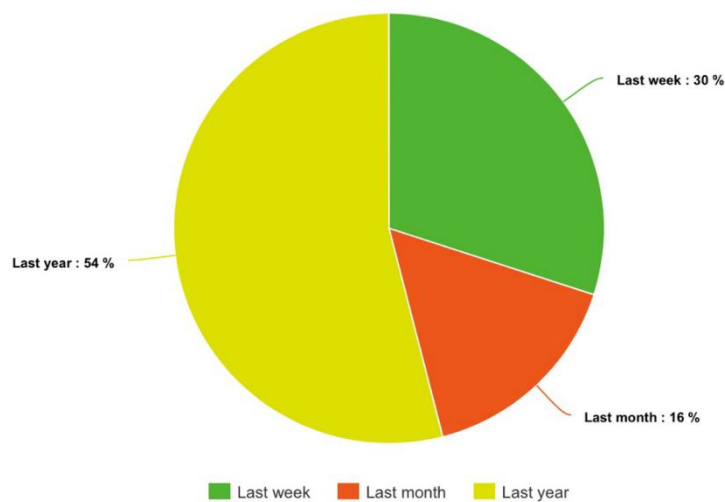


Figure 4:- Last dental visit.

The main reason of their last dental visit which scored highest and least were tooth pain and mobile teeth, 39% and 5% respectively. Other reasons were decayed teeth, stains and missing teeth as depicted in Figure 5. Each has corresponding percentages. Shaking teeth accounted for 5% of the last presenting complaints which is an indication of irreversible periodontal diseases, periodontitis.

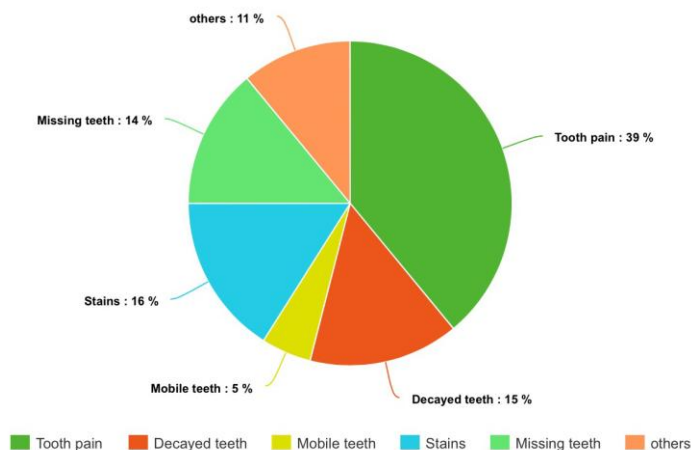


Figure 5:- Main reason of last dental visit.

Approximately, treatments received by 35% of the patients were scaling, followed by tooth extraction, 25%, restoration, 19%, others, 10%, orthodontic treatment, 6% and prosthetic treatment, about 5%.

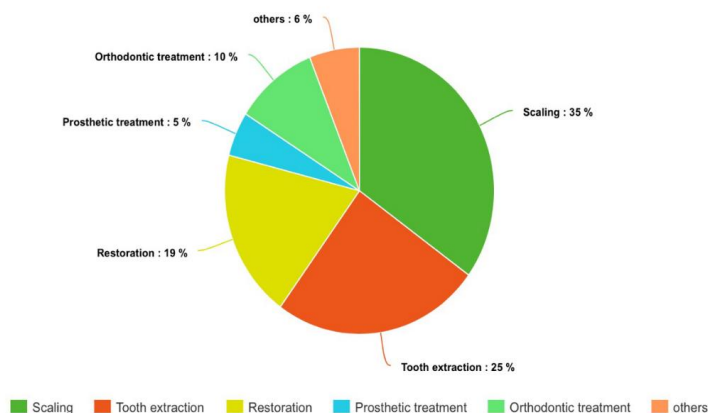


Figure 6:- Treatments undergone so far.

There were few reasons why people did not attend dental healthcare. They were frequent visits are required, fear of dental treatment, thinks problem is not severe enough, neglect oral problems, no dental problem and treatment is costly as shown in Figure 7. Percentages contributed by each were 24%, 23%, 18%, 14% and 8% respectively. Symptomatic and irregular dental visit has been reported to be more common than preventive dentist visits. This could be due to ignorance, poor oral health awareness, and poverty.

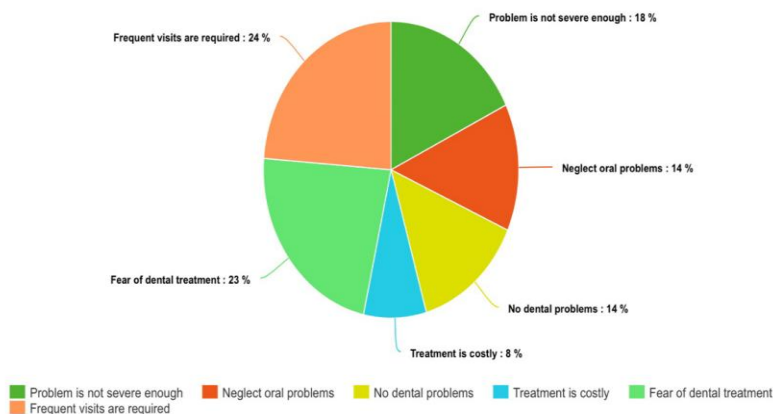


Figure 7:- Reasons for not attending dentist.

The toothache complaints and dental caries were highest among all range of patients visited dental hospital. Follow-up appointments, 20% being the second most common presenting complaints in this study reflects an aesthetic demand/need among dental patients. Fractured teeth, 17% were the third most common primary presenting complaints among the patients. The prevalence of fractured teeth as one of the major contributor to factors prompting the patient to seek dental healthcare services. Routine dental check-up and others scored the least, 11% and 9% respectively.

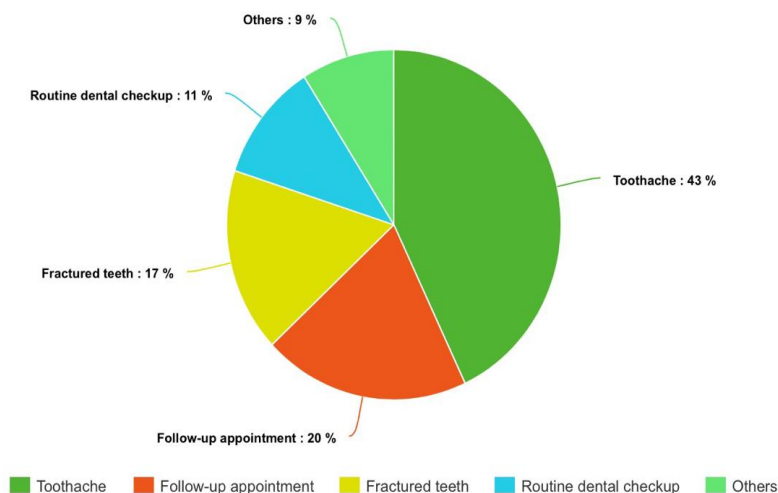


Figure 8:- Primary presenting complaints.

Conclusion:-

Data from the study revealed that diverse patients attended a private dental hospital had toothache as their primary presenting complaints. There is an essential to mobilize community health approach in order to increase awareness of important dental healthcare.

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