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Exploring barriers to delivering oral hygiene advice in general dental practice

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**BACKGROUND**
- Evidence suggests that not all dental professionals routinely deliver oral hygiene advice (OHA), a vital component of oral health promotion and prevention of oral disease.
- Barriers exist to dental professionals giving OHA in general dental practice.

**OBJECTIVES**
- To determine through a questionnaire:
  - Dental professionals’ perspectives on barriers to delivering OHA in general dental practice
  - Utilisation of the Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit

**METHODS**
- UK dental professionals (dentists, dental therapists and dental hygienists) who work in general dental practice were recruited by online convenience sampling to complete an anonymous cross-sectional questionnaire.
- Participants were recruited through dental clinical networks and a UK dental professional social media group (GDC number required to be a member).
- Data is presented using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests of quantitative data.
- Ethical approval was given by University of Bristol Faculty of Health Science Research Ethics Committee (FREC) (Ref: 104966).

Between 15 June 2020 and 15 December 2020, 154 dentists and 167 dental hygienists/dental therapists (DH/DT) completed the questionnaire.

**RESULTS**

**“Do you feel you have adequate time to deliver OHA to patients in general practice?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dentist</th>
<th>DH/DT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>48 (31.2%)</td>
<td>79 (47.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>106 (68.8%)</td>
<td>88 (52.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 8.7, p<0.001

**“What limitations do you feel there are to you delivering OHA in general practice?”**

53.2% of dentists and 9.6% of DH/DT reported pay as a limitation to delivering OHA in general practice (X² = 72, p<0.001).

9.1% of dentists and 19.7% of DH/DT had accessed Delivering Better Oral Health within the last month, but 25.3% of dentists and 22.2% of DH/DT had never accessed the Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit.

**CONCLUSIONS**
- Time is the most significant barrier to delivering OHA in general practice. Most dental professionals have between 2-5 minutes to give OHA. Dental professionals are more likely to have more time to deliver OHA to private patients compared to NHS patients.
- Patient compliance is the second largest barrier and pay is a larger barrier to dentists than DH/DT.
- DH/DT felt better prepared to deliver OHA in general practice by their undergraduate training compared to dentists.
- Around a quarter of dental professionals have never accessed Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit.

**IMPACT**
- Time, patient compliance and pay of dentists are barriers to OHA delivery.

**REFERENCES**