



PATIENT'S EXPERIENCES ON ETHICAL CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN A DENTAL HOSPITAL: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The supreme goal of any profession is to provide standard services to people based on ethical principles designed to achieve this goal. There is a growing need to identify whether the patients are satisfied with services provided in health care setting or not. The aim of the study was to evaluate ethical challenges encountered by patient in dental college. **Materials and methods:** A total of 299 participants were recruited in this survey who visited the dental hospital more than twice. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to ethical challenges and was graded on 5 point Likert scale. Chi square test was performed using SPSS software. The results were considered as statistical significant when $p \leq 0.05$. **Results:** Almost 69% of the patients were overall satisfied. Majority of the patients (97%) felt that consent was not sort prior to the treatment which is a major concern. Significant difference was observed gender wise in age group of less than twenty years regarding maintaining of confidentiality($p=0.049$). A Significant difference was observed gender wise in the age group of 31- 40 years regarding waiting period prior to the appointment($p=0.18$). **Conclusion:** Majority of the patient were satisfied with the clinical and non clinical services. Patient considered informed consent as an important issue which was neglected. A general awareness regarding ethical principles needs to be readdressed among faculty and students of dental college.

KEYWORDS: Dental, hospital, treatment, satisfaction, services.

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is regarded as an important outcome of care and is one of the major factors that contribute to better patient compliance and improved clinical outcomes.^[1,2] In recent years, disputes have increased because of inadequate and in appropriate treatment to serious problems of negligence and medical malpractice.^[3] Consequently, this highlights the need to identify whether the patient are satisfied with the dental services provided to them or not and what are the ethical challenges they value the most in healthcare setting.

Ethics is the branch of philosophy studying systematically what is right and what is wrong with respect to character and conduct. Ethical practice in healthcare is defined as consisting of informed consent, respect for integrity and patient's autonomy.^[4] Cultivating ethics in dental profession will not only

appraise the quality of dental treatment but also helps in avoiding unnecessary legal complication.^[3]

As a result, this study aims to evaluate the opinions of patients at a dental hospital about some commonly encountered ethical challenges and to investigate the ethical challenges considered most important by the patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was performed with patients from the outpatient department of a dental hospital in Bathinda, Punjab.

Sampling method

One dental hospital was selected. Convenient sampling was employed. Outpatients reporting to the dental hospital during the month of August -September 2021 who had visited atleast twice in total (including the visit

at the time of questionnaire presentation) constituted the study population.

Sample size calculation

The overall patient satisfaction was estimated to be 70% among outpatients reporting during the pilot study in the dental hospital. Sample size was calculated using the formula

$$N = \frac{Z^2 \alpha pq}{L^2}$$

Where,

p = patients overall satisfaction; q = 100 – p;

Zα = confidence factor for type I error α = 5% = 1.96;

L = allowable error, that is 10% of p

Where P = 70% q = 100-70 = 30% Zα = 1.96 L = 10% of P = 7

$$N = \frac{1.96^2 \times 70 \times 30}{7^2} = 165 \text{ participants}$$

Overall 299 participants were included.

Inclusion criteria

All the outpatients reporting for the treatment at dental hospital for a minimum of two times and who give the informed consent were included in this study till the sample size is achieved.

Exclusion criteria

- Patients who are not willing to participate in the study.
- Patients unable to give informed consent.

Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained from Institutional Review Board AIDS/IRECC/2021/04.

Survey instrument

A pre tested questionnaire was used to measure the patient satisfaction with the dental services provided by the dental hospital. The questionnaire explored both clinical and non clinical dental services.

The clinical dental services included the dentists performance like way of working, communication skills, ethical conduct and providing clear explanation before treatment and post treatment instructions. The clinical dental setting domain contained questions regarding dentists use of modern instruments, materials and infection control protocol monitoring.

The Non clinical services were included on the basis of ease of obtaining suitable appointment dates, appointment waiting time and the waiting time before meeting the doctor on the day of appointment. The physical exterior of the treatment room was also assessed.

The questionnaire also addressed patients overall satisfaction with the treatment provided. Sociodemographic questions regarding patients age, gender, occupation, location were also asked.

The questionnaire used a 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly dissatisfied (1) to strongly satisfied (5). This questionnaire was evaluated in a pilot survey with 30 patients which were not included in the final sample. Validity of the questionnaire was assessed which was found to be 0.83.

Statistical analysis

Data was entered in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and descriptive data and Chi- square test were analyzed using SPSS software. The results were considered significant when they were associated with $p \leq 0.05$.

RESULTS

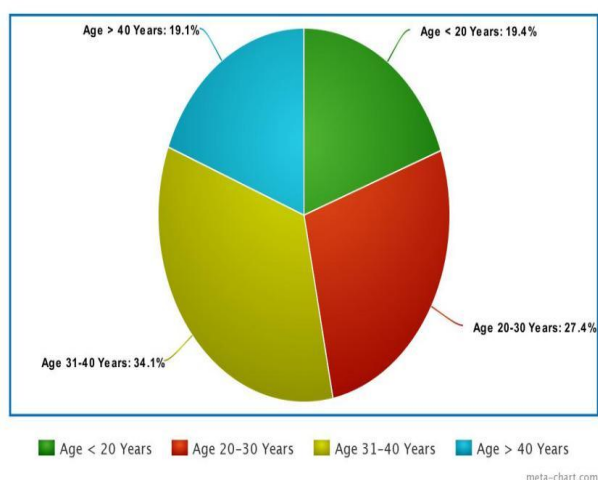
A total of 299 participants were included. Graph 1 shows majority of participants were among 20- 40 years of age(61.5%). Nearly equal distribution of male and female participants were seen (Male-51.2%, females-48.8%). Majority of participants belonged to clerical, shop or farming sector (26.4%). Mostly the participants were residents of Bathinda district(85.6%).

Around 76% of the patients were satisfied with the cleanliness of the treatment room. 57% of the patients think that operating dentist was supervised by a senior dentist. 64% of the patients felt that operating dentist was in a hurry to complete the procedure and 55% of the patients felt that instruments were properly sterilised before the treatment. 45% of the patients think that dentist was not careful with his instrument. 37% of the patients felt that that modern dental instruments were not used. Majority of the patients (97%) felt that consent was not sort prior to the treatment which is a major concern. Around 88% of the patients felt that treatment alternatives were not explained to them and 67% of the patients felt that they were not given a right to choose the treatment plan. Nearly 54% of the patients felt that confidentiality was not maintained during the treatment and 70% of patients felt that appointments were not fixed in a time that fit well in their schedule. No more than 39% of the patients felt that treatment was effectively completed and 69% of patients felt that post treatment instructions were not given to them. 98% of the patients think that they were not helped with any telephonic follow ups. Graph 2 depicts 69% of the patients were satisfied with the overall care and treatment provided to them.

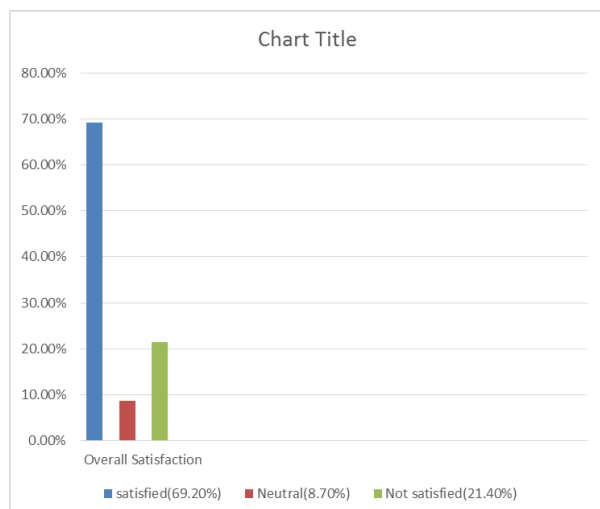
No significant difference based upon age and gender in relation to the questions regarding cleanliness and tidiness of the treatment room was seen ($p=0.93$), in relation to supervision by the senior dentist ($p=0.549$), hurriiness to complete the procedure by the operating dentist ($p=0.220$).

In questions related to instruments no significant difference was found as per age and gender. In relation to sterilization ($p=0.800$), Operating dentist being careful with his instruments ($p=0.412$), and use of modern instruments ($p=0.823$).

For responses related to ethical conduct during treatment no significant gender and age wise difference was found in relation to consent sought prior to treatment, treatment alternatives explained well in advance, patients right to choose the treatment plan. Significant difference was observed gender wise in age group of less than twenty years regarding maintaining of confidentiality($p=0.049$). A Significant difference was observed gender wise in the age group of 31- 40 years regarding waiting period prior to the appointment($p=0.18$).



Graph 1: Age wise distribution of study participants.



Graph 2: Overall patient's satisfaction with care and treatment provided.

DISCUSSION

The ultimate goal of any profession is to provide quality services to its people. The ethical standards of dental practise is undergoing a change being increasingly market driven system.^[5] There has been increase in a number of disputes regarding inappropriate treatment, malpractice and negligence. Therefore it is important to understand the relevancy of ethical aspects in dentistry.^[3] Present study tried to explore the patient satisfaction with the existing dental healthcare services.

Majority of patients belonged to 20 -40 years of age which is similar to the distribution of study participants by Chakrapani et al^[3], Nagappan et al^[6] and Ali et al.^[7] Awareness regarding the dental treatment has increased among the adults. Therefore patients of this age group were found more to be seeking the dental treatment.^[8] Present study had more male patients(51.2%) compared to female which was similar to trends of Chakrapani et al^[3] and Nagappan et al^[6] but contrary to Ali et al.^[7]

The reason behind the gender difference might be lack of oral health behaviour among males as compared to females who acted more positively towards oral health. The other reason for female reporting less for dental treatment can be lack of support from family, customs and transportation issues.

Majority of patients (50-55%) Belong to clerical or skilled profession having more financial issues preferring institutional treatment at concessional prices. Majority of patients belong to Bathinda as the institution is easily accessible to the people of Bathinda with ample transportation facility.

Age wise difference in overall satisfaction regarding dental treatment among patients was found to be non significant with maximum number of satisfaction among 20-40 years of age.

This result might be because overall health status of younger patients is better than older patients and they might require less expensive and comprehensive dental treatment and fewer follow up visits.^[7] This effect might leave a better impression on younger patients resulting in higher satisfaction level.

Present study showed that male patient expressed higher satisfaction with dental care services than female which is contrary to study done by Ali et al.^[7] This findings might be because of males greater exposure to dental services likely moderating their expectations. Present study results could facilitate focusing on patients complaints and attending to the concerns of dissatisfied patients. Further study may be needed to compare the patient satisfaction in the dental college with other dental care providers. The overall satisfaction rate among patients was found to be 69% which is in contrast to a study done by Ali et al.^[7] (42.6%).

CONCLUSION

The result of this survey questionnaire indicated that majority of the patients were satisfied with the facilities, services and treatment received at dental college. A need for interventions exists regarding accessibility, especially when booking an appointment and subsequent waiting period. There is however a general lack of awareness regarding informed consent in the dental field, which can only be alleviated by proper education and development.

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