



Case Report

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Evaluation of Impact of Internet Toward Dental Treatment: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study was to evaluate the domination of the Internet toward dental treatment among the general population.

Background: It has been observed for over a decade that there has been a drastic curiosity and interest among dental practitioners, researchers, and people working in dental clinics and dental hospitals in using social networking sites for dental problems. The growth and readily availability of internet and social sites for identifying the dental problems has increased over last few years. This study aimed at analyzing the impact of the Internet toward dental treatment.

Materials and Methods: This study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey that involved 500 patients visiting a private dental college during a period of 1.5 years (January 2024-june 2025). A self-structured questionnaire consisting of 25 closed-ended questions was formulated, in the form of a Google form which was later circulated among the study subjects through online mode. With the use of the statistical analysis tool SPSS software version 23.0, the data were systematically collected.

Results: In our study, young adults studying in college formed the majority of the study participants (65%), followed by literate older adults (35%). The study subjects have to choose the dental problem they are suffering from and also the dental treatment they want to be done from the prefabricated list of dental problems and dental treatments offered. participants were requested to indicate their preferred dental treatment option from the following list. The maximum study subjects opted for dental treatment to be done in dental college (50%), followed by those who will first search the treatment option on internet and then get the treatment done (30%) and lastly those who will opt for self-medication and home remedies (20%).

Conclusion: The vast dental diseases and treatments information available on the internet has become an easily and readily accessible source for the dental patients. This not only enhances their knowledge but also provides a platform for more interactive dental treatment sessions among the dental patients and dental treatment providers, leading to a more dental patient turnover to dental colleges, hospitals and dental clinics.

Introduction

With the increase in the population's access to the internet and to social platforms, they have become a real source of information for the young and adult population in all fields of medicine and dentistry. The Dental/Medical institutions/clinics/hospitals are presently using the Internet as a source of awareness of the importance of maintaining general and oral health and providing the access to all regarding the infrastructure and treatments facilities available at their level for the medical/dental problems. On the contrary, all sites do not give genuine and quality information, therefore aware

ness and educational upliftment is necessary among the individuals checking the information from the internet regarding the dental diseases and treatments [1-3]. There is a significant impact of the Internet on medical/dental health services as they provide vast information regarding available medical/dental health services at private/government sector and encouraging self-help [4].

Social Media (SM) is an innovative means of communication that facilitates the exchange of ideas and knowledge through its various platforms. Social media refers to online resources that al-

low individuals and groups to interact and communicate, exchange information, share ideas, send private messages, and post photos and other content using various SM applications. Moreover, it provides an open platform for individuals to express their opinions and engage in discussions on a wide range of topics [5,6]. Usage of internet has brought about substantial changes in various sectors, including politics, education, and corporations. Internet usage also has shown a significant impact on dental health industry. It not only provides various options for dental treatment, education and enhancing dental awareness [7]. Educating and informing patients through the Internet can offer numerous advantages in the future, such as enhancing the standard of care and making it more appropriate, motivating patients to adopt healthier habits, improving compliance with guidelines, and promoting the appropriate use of medications.8 thus this study was conducted to analyze the effect of internet usage on decision making in dental patients.

Materials and Methods

In the present study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey was administered in the form of a prefabricated Google form to 500 study subjects. A well planned, self-descriptive, self-structured, easily understandable, closed-ended questionnaire comprising 25 questions was used and fabricated through an online Google Form and was further sent to the study subjects via online mode. The data collected was systemically analyzed and statistically analyzed utilizing SPSS software.

Inclusion Criteria

Only those participants who were well educated with use of internet and were willing to participate in the present study were included.

Exclusion Criteria

Those participants who were unaware of using internet and not willing to participate were excluded from the present study .

Data Collection and Analysis

An online survey in the form of a Google Form was used to provide the questionnaire to all the study subjects those who were either young college going students or older literate adults. The data was systematically collected and scrutinized using the statistical analysis tool SPSS software version.

Results

In the present study 60% of the study subjects were young adults and rest 35% were older individuals with knowledge of internet. The study subjects were further asked to select their dental problems/problem they are suffering from and also opt for the choice of dental treatment they would like to undergo from the list of dental treatment options provided in the Google form.

The majority study subjects selected the preference of getting the dental treatment to be done in dental college (50%), followed by selecting the option of initially searching the treatment in internet first followed by undergoing the dental treatment (30%) and

lastly those who will opt for self-medication and home remedies (20%). In the present study majority of study subjects selected the option of visiting dental hospital or clinic based on the recommendation of the friend or relative (70%), followed by searching the review of the clinic/hospital review on the internet (20%) and lastly depending upon the ease and distance at which the clinic/hospital as situated from their home (10%). When searching Internet for dental diseases, majority of the study subjects will search for the treatment cost (60%) followed by those who will search for the treatment options that can be used for treating the disease (30%). Remaining (10%) will first check the reason for their dental problem and others (10%) will look for the outcome/prognosis which will be their following the dental treatment. It was observed that the younger adults were more interested in searching the reviews of the dental clinic, treatment options for various dental problems especially gum bleeding followed by toothache and missing tooth replacement as compared to older adults who were more commonly searching regarding the dental treatment cost and prognosis.

Discussion

In the present scenario Internet is widely used for various purposes including- entertainment, learning, marketing, shopping, and decision-making purposes, among others. With the advancement and technological enhancement in internet usage, this has a directly proportional influence on medical and dental health industries [8,9]. In our study, the majority of study subjects were young adults (60%) followed by older literate adults with internet knowledge (35%). Discussing the option of dental remedies, the maximum individuals selected the preference of getting the dental treatment to be done in dental college (50%), followed by selecting the option of initially searching for the treatment on the internet first followed by undergoing the dental treatment (30%) and lastly those who will opt self-medication and home remedies (20%). About their visit to dental clinics, majority marked the option of visiting only dental clinic at the time of any dental problem (70%) followed by going to dentist for routine dental checkups (20%) and only few were not willing to visit the dentist at all (10%). This is contrary to the results obtained from the study conducted by *Raj S, et al.*, [10] where about 50% of the participants stated that they would go for routine dental checks with their dentists, 44% of them would go only if they had dental problems, while 6% would never visit a dentist.

In the present study only 30% of the study subjects believed the facts and dental information available on internet, social media and blogs whereas 70% do not believe in the information. This is contrary to the results observed in study conducted by *Raj S, et al.*, [10] where over 60% of the participants do believe the facts or dental/medical information that is being provided on the Internet, SM, or blogs, while 40% of them do not believe these statements related to dentistry and dental treatment. In the present study majority of study subjects selected the option of visiting dental hospital or clinic based on the recommendation of the friend or relative (70%), followed by searching the review of the clinic/hospital review on the internet (20%) and lastly depending upon the ease and distance at which the clinic/hospital as situated from their home (10%).

Whereas in the study conducted by Raj S et al 52% of the individuals stated that they would visit a dental clinic or hospital based on popularity on the internet or social media, while 21% of them would not go based on popularity on internet and social media and 49% of the study participants do follow their dentists on their social media sites. The results were higher compared to those of the study conducted by Awdah, *et al.*, [11] in the Middle East and Mir, *et al.*, [12] in Uttar Pradesh, while 51% do not follow.

In our study 80% study subjects do not use internet as a source to diagnose dental diseases and prescribe medicine. This is in close approximate to the study conducted by Raj S, *et al.*, [10] where about 71% of the study participants do not use the Internet as a base or a toolbox for diagnosing dental disease and prescription of medicine, while 29% of the dentists would use the Internet as a toolbox for prescribing medicine. When searching Internet regarding dental diseases, majority of the study subjects in our study will search for the treatment cost (60%) followed by those who will search for the treatment options that can be used for treating the disease (30%). Remaining (10%) will first check the reason for their dental problem and others (10%) will look for the outcome/prognosis which will be their following the dental treatment. Whereas in the study conducted by Raj S, *et al.*, [10] when surfing on the Internet regarding dental problems, 44% of them stated that they would search for the cost of the treatment, 31% of them would search for the treatment plan, and 15% of the participants would search for the reason for the issue. Since there is a chance of misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment, it is always correct to consult with a dental professional for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan. It is also the need of the hour that the Internet should not replace professional dental advice. Patients should be attentive and careful when using the Internet to self-diagnose or self-treat dental problems. They should always take the help of genuine reliable and reputable dental websites or professional organizations and consult with their dentist before attempting any treatment.

Conclusion

Internet as a web of social networking has become irreplaceable source for health professionals to promote information by the

most effective means. The vast dental diseases and treatments information available on the internet has become an easily and readily accessible source for the dental patients. This not only enhances their knowledge but also provides a platform for more interactive dental treatment sessions among the dental patients and dental treatment providers, leading to a more dental patient turnover to dental colleges, hospitals and dental clinics.

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