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A cross-sectional study on patient experiences of receiving oral hygiene advice

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Background:

Most people who attend general dental practice receive oral hygiene advice (OHA), yet 66% of people have visible plaque and 25% don't clean their teeth twice a day, suggesting OHA given by dental professionals is not effective at improving oral hygiene or bringing about behavioural change. There is little research on patient experiences of receiving OHA and patient non-compliance.

Objectives:

To capture patient experiences of OHA received from dental professionals, exploring reasons for non-compliance.

Methods:

A cross-sectional questionnaire was completed by adults who attended a general dental practice within the last three years. An online convenience sample was recruited. Descriptive statistics and chi-squared analysis of quantitative data and content analysis of qualitative data framed with COM-B theory of behaviour change. Ethical approval was given by University of Bristol Faculty of Health Science Research Ethics Committee (FREC) (Ref: 112764).

Results:

382 responses were collected between 30 October 2020 and 31 March 2021. OHA was received by 178 (50.9%) who saw a dentist, and 91 (77.1%) who saw DH/DT ($p < 0.001$). OHA was overwhelmingly verbal, but DH/DT more likely than dentists to give practical demonstration ($p < 0.001$). Patients mainly received advice on performing oral hygiene ("capability"), but "motivation" factors were the most common reasons given for OHA non-compliance.

Conclusion:

A lower proportion of people received OHA in this study compared to previous national surveys. There is variation in patient experiences of OHA. Patients mainly receive verbal advice on performing oral hygiene (*capability*) which does not address *opportunity* or *motivation* aspects of COM-B.

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