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Research Article

IMPACT OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN ON AGE DEBILITATED CD PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this tele-survey was to assess satisfaction, as well as the frequency and type of prosthetic complications in terms of several variables, in patients with complete dentures during the lockdown days. A random sample of 50 subjects 60 years or above were tele-surveyed on the impact of lockdown and to access their dental concerns & health. All of them were edentulous. Among the edentate subjects geographical differences were small, but social class and behavioural differences were large.

Key Words:

Covid-19 Lockdown

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken our lives by storm, especially the people suffering from various ailments who are facing a tough time due to the non-availability of physical healthcare. In such times, where every person is worried about their life and scared beyond any normal behaviour. Oral health has been also affected as many patients were not able to consult the dentist and take appropriate treatment. The fear of the pandemic loomed high and even health care institutions were shut down including dental clinics. The patients had to depend on online facilities which could not completely meet the physical needs of the patient.

Patients who suffer from dental issues are in dilemma over available options to address their unbearable toothache, bleeding disorders and other serious oral health issues. Even the ones who have just minor queries can't --- contact the dental health specialist due to the prevailing lockdown situation. Especially the old aged people who are dependent on their children and relatives for visiting the doctor for their ailments. This is an assessment of old aged people with dentures through phone screening & questionnaire regarding their dental problems & difficulties in consulting the dentist during the peak hours of lockdown at Anjarakandy, Kannur.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, a self-administered structured questionnaire was developed to know the attitude of the patients from the Department of Prosthodontics regarding their dental problems & difficulties in consulting the dentist during the peak hours of lockdown at Anjarakandy, Kannur.

The study sample consisted of a total of 50 participants; out of them, 33 were males and 17 were females. The purpose of the survey was explained to the subjects and their verbal consent was obtained since this was a tele-survey.

Questions asked were as follows:-

1. How have been the lockdown days?
2. Mental status during lockdown?
3. Are you using the dentures on these days?
4. How often do you clean your dentures?
5. What is the complete denture appearance?
6. Are the dentures fit correct?
7. Ever felt mouth painful due to dentures?
8. Presence of ulcers?
9. Is there any kind of discomfort while eating due to the problems with your mouth/denture?
10. Have you ever avoided eating anything due to problems with your mouth/denture?
11. Satisfied with upper and lower denture?
12. Are you wearing dentures while sleeping?

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13. Are you using denture adhesives?
14. Is there any change in the diet plan after using dentures?

And ranking criteria were made

Rank A - patients who were comfortable.

Rank B - patients who were having problems but could neither call the doctor nor tell anyone.

Rank C - patients who had difficulties with the existing denture

DISCUSSION

The present findings addressed the difficulties faced by the geriatric denture wearers during the pandemic as they belonged to the high risk group. The pandemic had affected them severely, both mentally and physically.

While few were stressed as their families were displaced and they could not meet their dear and near ones, others were suffering alone because their children were abroad and there was no way to meet their respective doctors and dental surgeons. Some of them were worried about their children's job, future, financial aspects. Some had complex medical histories and pharmacotherapies. A few were homebound or living in institutions.

This telephonic survey revealed the problems faced by them with their dentures causing difficulty in mastication and speech. The telephonic follow up that was conducted helped these patients to remain calm. An online help desk was created for prescribing medication and advice regarding denture care. Advice was also given regarding the covid 19 pandemic and precautionary measures that need to be taken, especially for the old age group

The effects of required confinement in this pandemic situation increased their difficulty in accessing needed services. The difficulties faced by them were

1. Ill fitting dentures
2. Ulceration
3. Lack of retention
4. Mastication, speech & tongue restriction
5. Food accumulation & bad breath
6. Joint pain
7. Broken dentures

The elderly patients with ulceration and soreness due to ill fitting dentures were asked to remove the denture overnight and apply analgesic medications (gel/ointment) which were prescribed. Patients were advised salt water gargle, povidine iodine mouth gargle and to massage the gums with coconut oil.

Elderly patients with loose dentures were advised to use denture adhesives. They were asked to have soft food and chew bilaterally.

Those with speech and mastication problems were prescribed medications. Advice was given regarding proper usage, mastication. They were told to restrict extended mouth opening as well as advised to do mouth exercises.

Few patients had problems with food accumulation, staining and halitosis for which they were told to clean the denture using denture cleansers / tablets. They were also advised to clean the denture using brush and soap to remove the food accumulated.

The elderly patients with joint and muscle pain were advised to take analgesic medications which were prescribed and even exercises were advised.

Those with broken dentures were assured to fabricate new dentures as soon as possible.

From this study we were able to know the problems faced by the elderly denture wearing patients during the lockdown period of Covid 19 pandemic at Anjarakandy, kannur. These problems had affected the quality of their life and was not easy for them to be dealt with. For each one of them the dentures were more important for mastication and speech than for aesthetics. This study also showed, how much the elderly patients were dependent on to their dentures for mastication and speech. This study also helped to address the problems from the geriatric perspective.

CONCLUSION

This Covid-19 pandemic has brought into consideration the urgent need to design effective and affordable strategies and programs for better oral health and quality of life of the elderly, which are integrated into general health programs. This study confirms the fact that, the problems faced by aged denture wearing patients should not be underestimated and demands the same importance as any other emergency treatment procedures.

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