

Awareness of alternative medicine in dentistry among dental students – A survey

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ABSTRACT

Background: Alternative medicine is defined as any practice that is put forward as having the healing effects of medicine but is not founded on evidence gathered using the scientific method. Some of the examples are Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy. Even though alternative medicine is widely practiced in India, its full potential is not used in other medical fields such as dentistry. Herbal extracts have been successfully used in dentistry as tooth cleansing and antimicrobial plaque agents. **Aim:** This study aims to create the awareness of alternative medicine in dentistry among the dental students. **Materials and Methods:** This study consists of a questionnaire about awareness of alternative medicine, its types, side effects, consideration over allopathic medicine, etc. It is done in the form of online survey and sent to 100 dental students. Results were statistically analyzed and calculated. **Results:** From the results obtained, it is clearly inferred that there is minimum knowledge of alternative medicine among the dental students and is not ready to advice alternative medicine. **Conclusion:** There is minimum knowledge of alternative medicine among the dental students and is not ready to advice alternative medicine. This study is about creating awareness of alternative medicine and promotes its wide use in dentistry so that alternative medicine will also contribute more in near future.

KEY WORDS: Alternative medicine, Awareness, Dental students, Dentistry, Survey

INTRODUCTION

Herbal medicines are drugs of plant origin and are referred to as alternative medicine^[1]. Many herbal medicines have been proven to be beneficial in the treatment of various medical conditions^[2]. Some of the commonly marketed pharmaceutical drugs are derived from herbs, like aspirin which is derived from white willow bark and digitalis which is derived from foxglove.

However, the effect of herbal products on oral tissues, their mechanism of action, and side effects is lacking sufficient evidence. Several natural products are marketed for oral and dental use to satisfy the shift to the usage of natural products from pharmaceutical products among the public. These alternative products can be either dental products with natural ingredients or herbal products. Different herbs have been included in dental products as follows: bloodroot, caraway,

chamomile, *Echinacea*, peppermint, rosemary, thyme, *Aloe vera*, green tea, fennel, ginger, *Salvadora persica* (miswak extract), clove oil, *Eucalyptus*, and *Nigella sativa* oil^[3,4]. Toothpastes and oral rinses are usually marketed as cosmetic products^[5]. Both products are used to maintain good oral hygiene and counteract bad breath^[6]. Poor oral hygiene results in plaque accumulation which is a major etiological factor in occurrence of dental caries and gingival and periodontal diseases. Toothpaste containing a herbal formulation (*Aloe vera*) decreases plaque accumulation and improves gingival condition^[7,8]. *Sanguinaria* extract, a derivative of *Sanguinaria canadensis* (bloodroot), has been incorporated in oral rinse and toothpaste products to control bad breath and has proved to be effective^[8]. Herbal mouthwashes and toothpastes containing miswak extract that decreases plaque accumulation and gingival inflammation^[9].

In dentistry, *Nigella sativa* possesses an anti-inflammatory effect on the dental pulp and thus can be used as a pulp medicament in clinical practice^[10]. Although several herbal products have been tested, yet conclusive results are still lacking. Researchers should

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be encouraged to conduct controlled studies to prove the effectiveness and safety of natural dental products. Those studies will provide dentists with sufficient clinical evidence before prescribing promoted natural products for their patients. This study is about creating awareness of alternative medicine in dentistry among dental students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This survey is done in the form of a questionnaire. A sample of 100 dental students was taken. The survey is distributed as online link made by SurveyPlanet. This questionnaire comprised 11 questions related to alternative medicine, its types, side effects, consideration over allopathic medicine, preference of

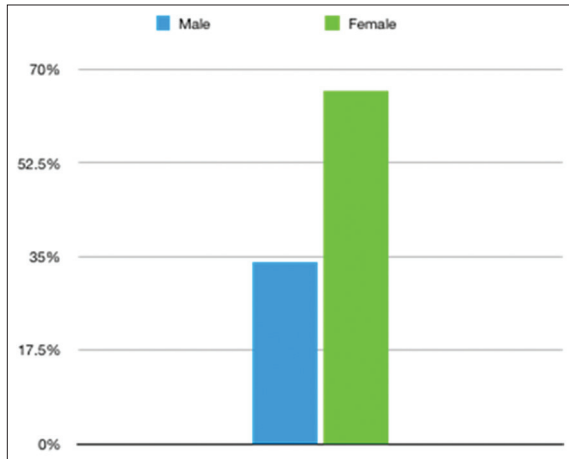


Figure 1: Gender

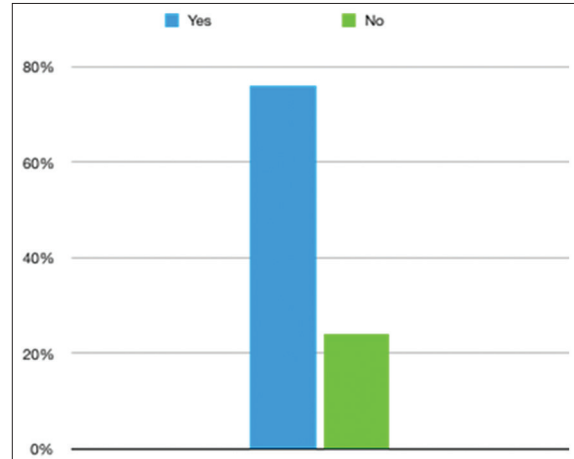


Figure 4: Do you think that alternative medicine is widely used nowadays?

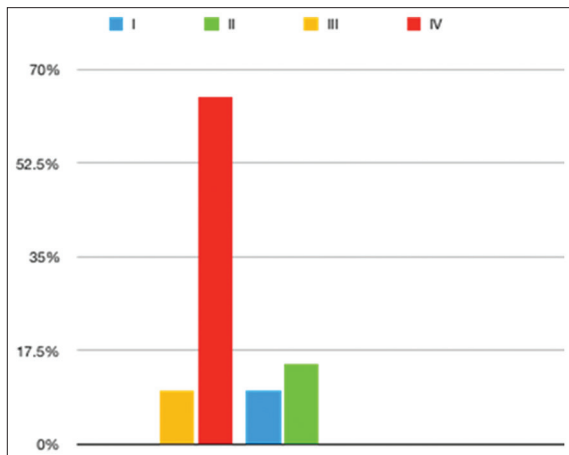


Figure 2: Year of study

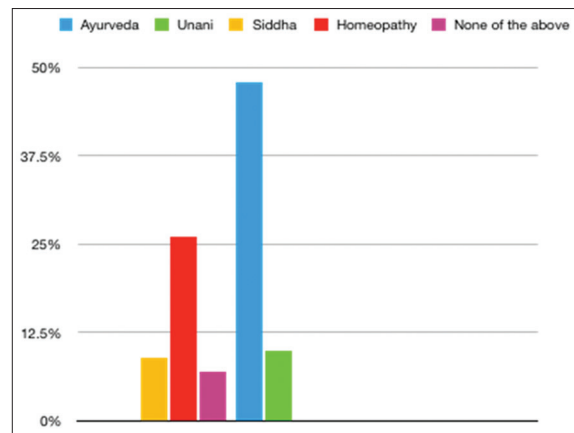


Figure 5: Which type of alternative medicine do you prefer?

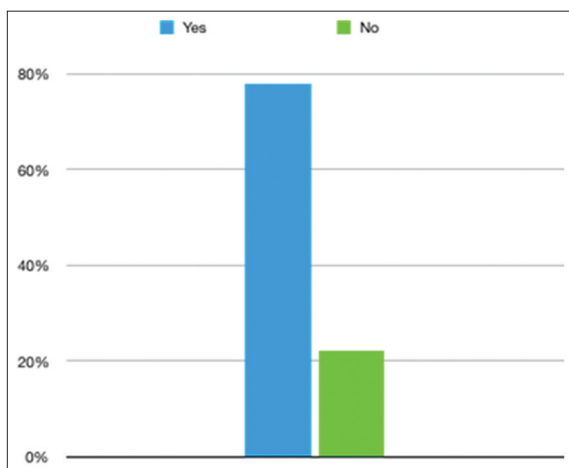


Figure 3: Do you know about alternative medicine?

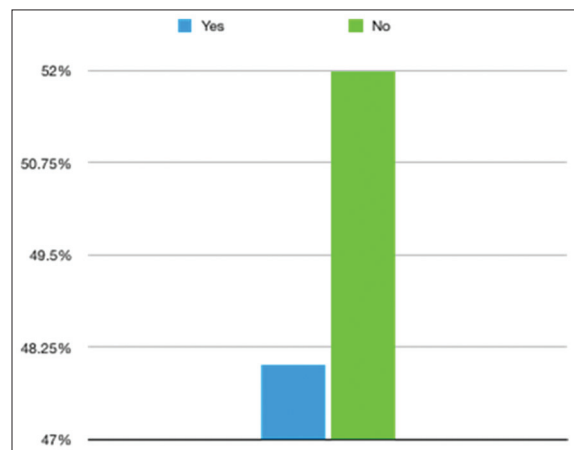


Figure 6: Do you think that alternative medicine has side effects?

medicine to patient, etc. The results were statistically analyzed and calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows that 36% are male participants and 64% are female participants. Figure 2 shows that

65% of participants are studying 4th year compared to 15% (II), 15% (I), and 5% (III). Figure 3 shows that 78% of the students are aware of alternative medicine and 22% are unaware. Figure 4 shows that 76% of students think that alternative medicine is widely used and 24% of students disagree. Figure 5

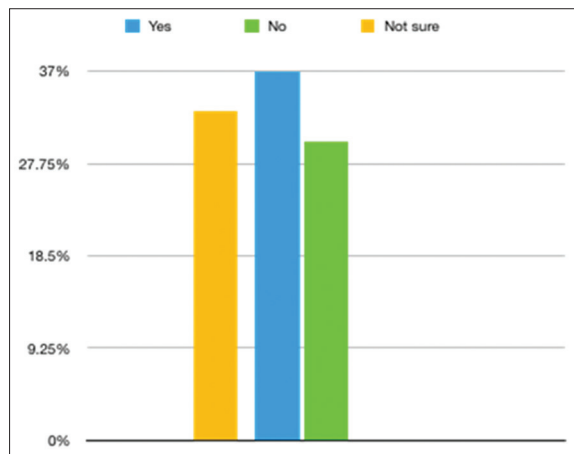


Figure 7: Would you consider alternative medicine over allopathic medicine?

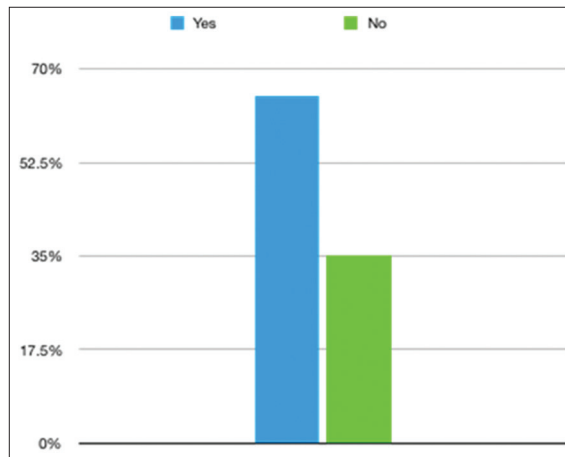


Figure 10: Do you feel that alternative medicine has prolonged healing time?

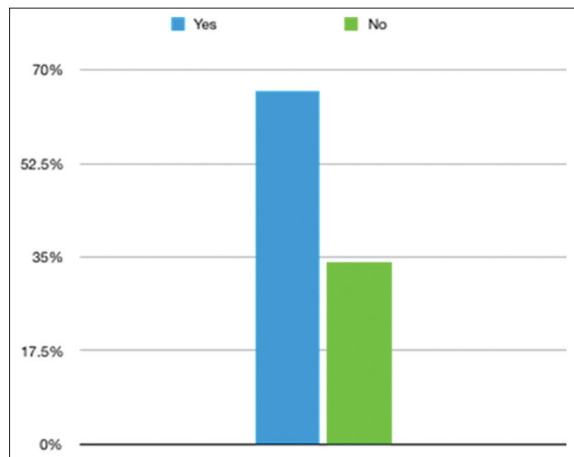


Figure 8: Do you know that alternative medicine can be used in dentistry?

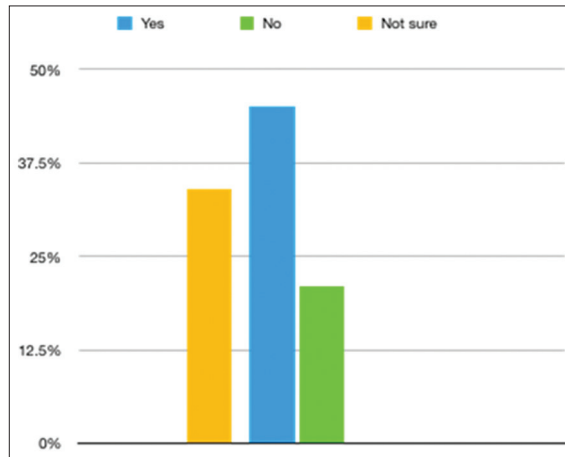


Figure 11: Do you feel that regular use of alternative medicine will reduce the dental caries?

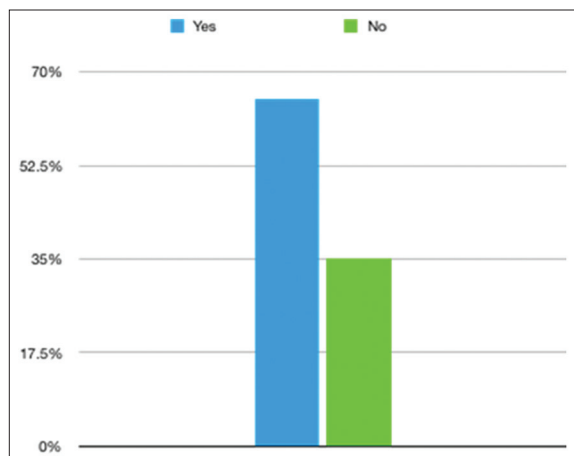


Figure 9: Do you think that alternative medicine has advantage over allopathic medicine in dentistry?

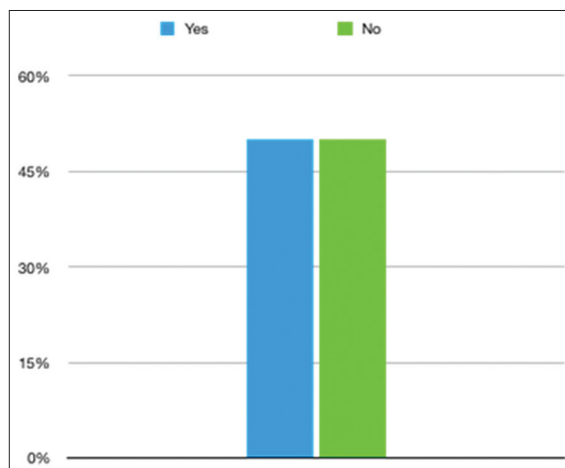


Figure 12: Will you advice your patients to take alternative medicine?

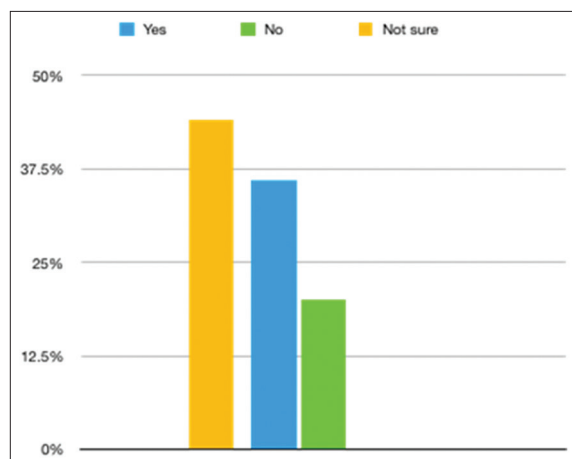


Figure 13: If advised about alternative medicine, do you feel that patients will take up?

shows that 48% of students prefer Ayurveda and 26% prefer Homeopathy. Figure 6 implies that half percent of the students tell that alternative medicine has side effect and half percent tells it does not have side effect. Figure 7 shows that 37% of students are strong in suggesting alternative medicine over allopathic medicine. Figures 8 and 9 imply that around 65% of students agree that alternative medicine can be used in dentistry and it has advantage over allopathic medicine, whereas 35% of students disagree. Figure 10 shows that 66% of participants feel that alternative medicine has prolonged healing time. Figure 11 shows that 45% of students agree that regular use of alternative medicine will reduce the risk of dental caries. Figure 12 shows that 50% of students are ready to advice about alternative medicine to their patients and 50% of students are not ready to advice.

Figure 13 implies that 36% of students think that patients might accept alternative medicine if advised.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it is clearly evident that there is minimum knowledge of alternative medicine among the dental students and is not ready to advice alternative medicine. This study is about creating awareness of alternative medicine and promotes its wide use in dentistry so that alternative medicine will also contribute more in near future.

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