KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR OF DENTAL PRACTITIONERS TOWARDS HIV INFECTED PERSONS IN KERALA, SOUTH INDIA

Abstract:

Background: Identification of oral lesions and oral rehabilitation form an important aspect in the management of HIV positive patients. The knowledge and attitude of dental practitioners influence their behaviour in providing optimal dental care to these HIV positive patients.

Objective: The objective of this study was to assess (1) dental practitioner’s knowledge about HIV infection (2) the attitude and behaviour of dental practitioners towards HIV infected patients

Methods: A preformed pretested questionnaire was distributed to the practising dental surgeons. The questions pertained to knowledge about transmission and diagnosis of HIV infection. The questions also addressed the attitude and behaviour of dental surgeons towards HIV seropositive patients.

Results: Out of 300 questionnaires distributed, 154 were completed and received. About 88% of the dental surgeons had sufficient knowledge about the transmission and diagnosis of HIV infection. 80% were aware of the universal precautions to be followed in dental practise. While 98% agreed that it is their moral responsibility to treat HIV positive patients, only 65% considered it safe to treat HIV patients. 41% of the dentists had the opinion that HIV positive doctors can continue to practice.
Conclusion: The findings of our study revealed that dental practitioners had limited understanding about the source of infection and practice of universal precautions, which might be responsible for their contradictory behaviour towards HIV infected patients. These findings emphasize the need for continuing dental education programs as a part of undergraduate curriculum that have to be designed with updated information on all aspects of HIV infection.