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## Case Report

# Knowledge and attitude of dentists in India towards patient safety – A cross-sectional study

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To record the knowledge and attitude of dentists in India towards patient safety in dentistry.

**Materials and method:** An online questionnaire of 13 questions was prepared to determine dentist's knowledge and attitudes towards patient safety in dentistry. Members of an online closed discussion group of dentists ( $n =$  approximately 5000) working in India were contacted on three separate occasions during October 2013–January 2014.

**Results:** 1025 responses were obtained. 19% of respondents stated that they actively took steps to improve safety standards but only 8% of the total sample believed that their employing organisation or professional body would support them to improve patient safety. In addition, only 8% believed that senior staff members encouraged open discussion on surgical errors or how to prevent them. 67% of dentists stated that they had inadequate knowledge on patient safety issues and 97% recommended that patient safety in dentistry be given a higher priority in the undergraduate dental curriculum.

**Conclusion:** There is a need to improve knowledge about patient safety in dentistry among dentists in India and to create a more open culture in reporting adverse incidents.

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## 1. Introduction

Patient safety is a global public health issue. Estimates show that in high-income countries as many as 1 in 10 patients are harmed whilst receiving hospital care; however, in mid- to low-income countries, the probability of patients being harmed is much higher.<sup>1</sup> The risk of health care associated

infection in some low-income countries is as much as 20 times higher than in high-income countries.<sup>1,2</sup>

Medical error and adverse event reporting are becoming major issues in health care systems across the world. This was highlighted in the Institute of Medicine publication: “To err is human: building a safer health system”.<sup>3</sup> The simplest definition of patient safety is the prevention of errors and adverse effects to patients associated with health care.<sup>4</sup> It was

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defined by the Institute of Medicine as: “the prevention of harm to patients”.<sup>5</sup>

In 2002, WHO Member States agreed on a World Health Assembly resolution on patient safety.<sup>1</sup> With increasing awareness amongst the Indian population regarding dental diseases, there is a growing need for good quality dental care with an improvement in patient safety standards.<sup>6-8</sup> In India, there are approximately 180,000 dental professionals, 35,000 specialists, 300 institutes and over 5000 laboratories. Most dentists work in private practice and are exposed to blood and saliva on daily basis; this is a major source of cross-infection. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been done till date to assess the knowledge and attitude of dental surgeons towards patient safety in India. Considering the above facts, the focus of this paper is to assess the knowledge and attitude of Indian dentists towards patient safety issues in dentistry.

## 2. Methods

A cross-sectional study was used to carry out this online survey of dentists working in India. The survey page displayed a brief introduction to the topic, the aims of conducting the survey and a questionnaire containing 13 questions relating to patient safety issues in dentistry. The survey was distributed online through the Facebook group: “Indian Health Professionals around the world – a common agenda”. This group has more than 5000 Indian dentist members (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/indianhealthprofessionals>). Personal e-mails and communication through phone were also used to enrol a maximum number of participants for the survey.

The questionnaire was accessible for 1 month and the data generated from the survey were collected and analysed.

Questionnaire: Knowledge and attitude of dental surgeons of Indian dental diaspora towards patient safety.

Q1. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 or older

Q2. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

Q3. What is your professional status?

- Dental student
- Dentist
- Manager
- Answer choices responses
- Dental student
- Dentist
- Manager

Q4. For how many years have you been practising dentistry?

- 5-10
- 10
- 15
- more than 15

Q5. I am actively taking steps to improve patient safety.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q6. My organisation is taking active steps to improve patient safety.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q7. My supervisor/manager/instructor seriously considers staff suggestions for improving patient safety.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q8. When a lot of work needs to be done quickly, we work together as a team to get the work done.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q9. In my work area/unit, we discuss ways to prevent errors from happening again.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q10. People will freely speak up if they see something that may negatively affect patient care.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q11. After we make changes to improve patient safety, we evaluate their effectiveness.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q12. Dental surgeons in India are aware of the problems related to patient safety.

- Disagree slightly
- Disagree strongly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

Q13. Should patient safety in dentistry be given more importance while training young dentists in Indian dental schools?

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree slightly
- Neutral
- Agree slightly
- Agree strongly

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