ABSTRACT

Background: People with special needs present unique challenges for dental providers, who may have limited or no provision of didactic of their various medical, behavioral, and emotional conditions.

Methods: An online survey was sent via email to 3 groups of dentists: a random sample of general practitioners and pediatric dentists (n=18,521); all members of the Special Care Dentistry Association (SCDA) with available email addresses (n=350); and dentists members of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) with email addresses (n=26).

Results: Data was collected on: • Provider demographics • Practice characteristics • Didactic education and clinical training • Barriers to providing care to patients with special needs • Facilitators of providing care to patients with special needs • Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SAS v9.4

Conclusions: Approximately 3 years after the survey, a survey was sent to 3 groups of dentists: a random sample of general practitioners and pediatric dentists (n=18,521); all members of the Special Care Dentistry Association (SCDA) with available email addresses (n=350); and dentists members of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) with email addresses (n=26).

RESULTS (cont.)

• Almost half of those who supplied information about postdoctoral training had completed a dental residency program and 16.5% had completed both a residency and fellowship program

• The most important barriers to serving patients with special needs were identified as: not being a Medicaid provider, not having adequate dental office, and not having a dental office that was properly equipped

• Practice accommodations such as wide hallways/doorways, being equipped to treat patients in their own chairs, and assigning of trained/experienced staff had the highest impact on dentists’ decisions to treat “many” people with special needs (81.7%-85.2% vs 61.5%-67.0%; P<.001) (Figure 3)

Figure 1. Percentage of Dentists That Provided Dental Services for “Many” Patients With Special Needs by Practice Accommodations/Features Offered to These Patients

• Dentists who were in agreement that education and training in special needs increased their willingness, confidence, and/or provided practical information and enhanced their skills to treat these patients were more likely to provide dental treatment to “many” such patients than other survey respondents (67.2%-85.2% vs 56.0%-68.6%; P<.005) (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Percentage of Dentists That Provided Dental Services for “Many” Patients With Special Needs by Dentists’ Perceptions of Education and Preparedness to Treat These Patients

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

• Dental education, training, and/or experience in working with populations with special needs as well as dental practice accommodations for people with special needs were the largest facilitators for dentists providing oral health services to “many” of these patients

• Barriers to serving patients with special needs included not being a Medicaid provider and not having a properly-equipped dental office

• Training a prepared dental workforce to manage the care for populations with special health care needs is imperative for these patients to attain and maintain optimal oral and general health

REFERENCE


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