

Abstract

Background

Parental education on child oral health has an important role in caries prevention. Leaflets are a means of delivering educational messages. The study aims to evaluate the efficacy of leaflets in improving parental knowledge on prevention of caries in children.

Methods

A cross-sectional study. Parents attending with their children to a pediatric clinic at a large hospital were asked to complete a questionnaire that noted their sociodemographic characteristics, oral hygiene practices, and knowledge on prevention of caries in children. Their knowledge on caries prevention in children was given a score out of 20. After reading an educational leaflet covering the main aspects of caries prevention, a follow up phone interview was conducted one month later to evaluate any improvement in parental knowledge. ANOVA and McNemar's tests were used for statistical analysis.

Results

391 parents participated in the study. The average knowledge score pre-intervention was 6.4 out of 20. There was no significant association between any of the sociodemographic variables and pre-intervention knowledge scores. 10.8% of parents were regular dental attenders. Around 12% of parents were aware of the age of the child at the first dental visit and the correct age to start toothbrushing; 20.5% knew about fluoride varnish; 7.2% understood that sugar containing snacks should be consumed at once; and less than 50% believed that regular dental visits prevent caries. After reading the leaflet there was a statistically significant improvement in almost all variables evaluating parents' knowledge on caries prevention in children.

Conclusion

Knowledge on prevention of caries in children among this sample of parents is very poor. Leaflets were successful in improving parental knowledge. There is a need to implement such leaflets in healthcare centers and hospitals and to further evaluate their efficacy by comparison with other means.