

Implementation of Hybrid Curriculum in Canadian Dental Schools to Manage Child Abuse and Neglect

Authors : Priyajeet Kaur Kaleka

Abstract : Introduction: A dentist is often the first responder in the battle for a patient's healthy body and maybe the first health professional to observe signs of child abuse, be it physical, emotional, and/or sexual mistreatment. Therefore, it is an ethical responsibility for the dental clinician to detect and report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect (CAN). The main reasons for not reporting suspected cases of CAN, with special emphasis on the third: 1) Uncertainty of the diagnosis, 2) Lack of knowledge of the reporting procedure, and 3) Child abuse and neglect somewhat remained the subject of ignorance among dental professionals because of a lack of advance clinical training. Given these epidemic proportions, there is a scope of further research about dental school curriculum design. Purpose: This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude of dentists in Canada regarding signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect (CAN), reporting procedures, and whether educational strategies followed by dental schools address this sensitive issue. In pursuit of that aim, this abstract summarizes the evidence related to this question. Materials and Methods: Data was collected through a specially designed questionnaire adapted and modified from the author's previous cross-sectional study on (CAN), which was conducted in Pune, India, in 2016 and is available on the database of PubMed. Design: A random sample was drawn from the targeted population of registered dentists and dental students in Canada regarding their knowledge, professional responsibilities, and behavior concerning child abuse. Questionnaire data were distributed to 200 members. Out of which, a total number of 157 subjects were in the final sample for statistical analysis, yielding response of 78.5%. Results: Despite having theoretical information on signs and symptoms, 55% of the participants indicated they are not confident to detect child physical abuse cases. 90% of respondents believed that recognition and handling the CAN cases should be a part of undergraduate training. Only 4.5% of the participants have correctly identified all signs of abuse due to inadequate formal training in dental schools and workplaces. Although nearly 96.3% agreed that it is a dentist's legal responsibility to report CAN, only a small percentage of the participants reported an abuse case in the past. While 72% stated that the most common factor that might prevent a dentist from reporting a case was doubt over the diagnosis. Conclusion: The goal is to motivate dental schools to deal with this critical issue and provide their students with consummate training to strengthen their capability to care for and protect children. The educational institutions should make efforts to spread awareness among dental students regarding the management and tackling of CAN. Clinical Significance: There should be modifications in the dental school curriculum focusing on problem-based learning models to assist graduates to fulfill their legal and professional responsibilities. CAN literacy should be incorporated into the dental curriculum, which will eventually benefit future dentists to break this intergenerational cycle of violence.

Keywords : abuse, child abuse and neglect, dentist knowledge, dental school curriculum, problem-based learning

Conference Title : ICCCCA 2021 : International Conference on Causes and Consequences of Child Abuse

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 24-25, 2021