

The Attitudinal Effects of Dental Hygiene Students When Changing Conventional Practices of Preventive Therapy in the Dental Hygiene Curriculum

Authors : Shawna Staud, Mary Kaye Scaramucci

Abstract : Objective: Rubber cup polishing has been a traditional method of preventative therapy in dental hygiene treatment. Newer methods such as air polishing have changed the way dental hygiene care is provided, yet this technique has not been embraced by students in the program nor by practitioners in the workforce. Students entering the workforce tend to follow office protocol and are limited in confidence to introduce technologies learned in the curriculum. This project was designed to help students gain confidence in newer skills and encourage private practice settings to adopt newer technologies for patient care. Our program recently introduced air polishing earlier in the program before the rubber cup technique to determine if students would embrace the technology to become leading-edge professionals when they enter the marketplace. Methods: The class of 2022 was taught the traditional method of polishing in the first-year curriculum and air polishing in the second-year curriculum. The class of 2023 will be taught the air polishing method in the first-year curriculum and the traditional method of polishing in the second-year curriculum. Pre- and post-graduation survey data will be collected from both cohorts. Descriptive statistics and pre and post-paired t-tests with alpha set at .05 to compare pre and post-survey results will be used to assess data. Results: This study is currently in progress, with a completion date of October 2023. The class of 2022 completed the pre-graduation survey in the spring of 2022. The post-graduation survey will be sent out in October 2022. The class of 2023 cohort will be surveyed in the spring of 2023 and October 2023. Conclusion: Our hypothesis is students who are taught air polishing first will be more inclined to adopt that skill in private practice, thereby embracing newer technology and improving oral health care.

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