

How important is sustainability to the dental profession in Ireland?

Précis

A survey of 735 dental professionals (dentists, dental nurses, practice managers, hygienists, receptionists, specialists and other) found that 69% of respondents were interested in environmental sustainability.

Abstract

Objectives: To find out how important environmental sustainability is to the dental profession in Ireland. The extent of the dental profession's interest in and knowledge of sustainability is unclear.

Materials and methods: A total of 735 questionnaires were distributed to dental practices and at dental conferences in Co. Dublin. The questionnaires sought information from the members of the dental team on their interest in sustainability, their understanding of it, their interest in learning more, and whether they consider sustainable energy use, travel, waste disposal, goods and services, and costs. It also sought to find out if they measure their carbon footprint and if they think sustainability should be a HSE priority.

Results: A total of 735 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 69% of the respondents stated that they are interested in sustainability, and 68% think it should be a HSE priority. However, only 31% of dental professionals consider sustainable travel and 43% consider sustainable energy use, while 58% consider sustainable waste disposal practices. Over half of the sample said they fully understand what environmental sustainability means, with 64% of people interested in learning more about it. Of the respondents, 34% think sustainable practices would decrease costs, while 20% measure their practice's carbon footprint.

Conclusions: The dental profession in Ireland cares about environmental sustainability, but more research and policies should be introduced in Ireland to increase awareness of how sustainable practices can improve within dentistry.

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