

The attitudes of undergraduate dental students to the use of the rubber dam

Abstract: The majority of dental schools teach that use of the rubber dam is mandatory for certain procedures, e.g., endodontic therapy and adhesive dentistry. Despite this, many dentists perceive use of the rubber dam as a hindrance to dental treatment in adults and children.

Purpose: This study sought to evaluate the attitude of undergraduate students towards the use of the rubber dam and elucidate if the negativity towards its use is evident in undergraduate clinics.

Methods: A structured questionnaire was developed, which sought to establish current perceptions of the use of the rubber dam in adults and children, and circulated to the current fourth and final year clinical undergraduate class in the Dublin Dental Hospital.

Results: Isolation was identified as the main advantage of using a rubber dam and difficulty to place the main disadvantage. Some 98.5% of students believed they had received adequate training in rubber dam use for adults. While 72% of students were confident in placing a rubber dam for children, 38% felt that more training was necessary. The most commonly cited difficulty in placing a rubber dam was tight contacts. Most students are confident regarding which clamps to use. The majority of students (61%) believe that patients, especially children, prefer treatment without rubber dam isolation and that adequate isolation can be achieved without using a rubber dam. The average time spent placing the rubber dam was eight minutes for children and five minutes for adults. The students are more predisposed to using the rubber dam on adults than children for the same procedure.

Conclusions: Undergraduate students are not convinced that the use of a rubber dam is effective and efficient except for endodontic therapy. Students already believe that patients, both adults and children, would prefer their treatment to be conducted without a rubber dam. Teaching efficient methods of placing the rubber dam may improve students' confidence and reduce placement time so that the students will be more likely to use the rubber dam after graduation.

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The role of bitewing radiographs – a review of current guidelines

Abstract: This article sets out guidelines on the use of bitewing radiographs for the detection of dental caries, with suggested risk factors and recall intervals. It describes a case in which extensive carious lesions were not detected clinically, but were revealed when radiographs were taken during an orthodontic assessment.

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