

The effect of education upon dentists' knowledge and attitude toward fissure sealants

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Abstract

Sealants are highly effective in preventing dental caries in pits and fissures of teeth. It has been shown, however, that sealants are not widely used by dentists. This study aimed to inform dental professionals about sealants and to evaluate the effect of such information on dentists' knowledge, attitude and use of sealants. A total of 190 dentists were surveyed to determine their knowledge and attitude toward sealants. Respondents were randomly assigned to an "Education" group who received education materials in contrast with the "No Education" group who did not receive any until after the education phase. After 12 months, 105 dentists responded to the post-intervention survey. Comparison between the two surveys showed that dentists' knowledge increased significantly in the "Education" group. No difference was detected in the dentists' knowledge in the "No Education" group. However, dentists' attitude toward sealant use did not significantly improve in either of the groups. It is, therefore, concluded that continuing education was more likely to change dentists' knowledge rather than attitude and behaviour. Efforts to encourage sealant use by dentists should continue, but with the recognition that changes in behaviour occur over a long time and that other external factors in the professional environment may affect the rate of change.