Patient Attitudes Regarding the Role of the Dentist in Vaccination for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

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BACKGROUND

While no prior research exists to understand patient perspectives of their dentist playing a role in COVID-19 vaccination, past research has evaluated the role of dentists in other vaccination campaigns using several diseases and audiences (Dean et al. 2022). It is important to continue to investigate what role dentists can play in ongoing preventative healthcare priorities. A survey was validated and distributed to assess patient attitudes and beliefs regarding a dentist’s role regarding the vaccination of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Human Papillomavirus (HPV).

METHOD

Survey Validation
- A previously published questionnaire was adapted and validated using a quantitative psychometric analysis and quantitative stakeholder evaluation to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of results and data.
- A focus group was held to evaluate the clarity of the questions. 9 eligible participants consented to participate in the focus group. The focus group meeting was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed similarly to previous studies (Maramaldi et al. 2017).
- A codebook was developed. The first order codes were behavior, intentions, knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, survey changes, acceptability, and feasibility. Knowledge and attitudes were broken down further into second order and pattern codes.
- Survey changes were made based on results of qualitative and quantitative analysis to maximize clarity and effectiveness of the final instrument.

Survey Distribution
- Eligibility: 18-45 years old
- 600 surveys
- $20 Target gift card incentive
- Survey was administered in person on an iPad using REDcap
- Participants were provided with background paragraphs on COVID-19 and HPV prior to completing the survey on the iPad, and an infographic was provided upon completion.
- Advertisements on social media and around the dental school
- Potential eligible participants were recruited in various locations

SURVEY CHANGES

- Defined “completely vaccinated” in regards to the COVID-19 vaccine and HPV series in the following questions: “Are you, or do you plan to become, up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations? This could include the 1 dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine or the 2 doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccinations, plus any boosters applicable to you.”
- “Are you, or do you plan to become, up to date on your human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination? This could include 2 doses of the Gardasil 9 vaccination if received before 15 years of age or 3 doses if received at or after 15 years.”
- Expanded answer choices to include all possible vaccination statuses and intentions
- Added “prefer not to answer” as an answer choice about vaccination status and intentions
- Changed the wording “dental professional” to “dentist”
- Added the vaccine name Gardasil to question inquiring about HPV vaccination status and intentions

DISCUSSION

The survey results show a majority of patients accept their dentist having a role in vaccine-related efforts. Participants are more accepting of their dentist’s role with COVID-19 vaccinations than HPV vaccinations. Participants are also more informed about COVID-19 vaccines than HPV vaccines. This exhibits a need to increase the public’s education about HPV and its relation to oral health. Access to care, vaccine uptake, and disease prevention could increase if a dentist’s role were expanded to include vaccine education and administration.

REFERENCES
