Abstract

Objectives: Few studies have examined dentists’ subjective ratings of importance of caries risk factors or tested whether dentists use this information in treatment planning. This study tested several hypotheses related to caries risk assessment (CRA) and individualized caries prevention (ICP).

Methods: Data were collected as part of a questionnaire entitled ‘Assessment of Caries Diagnosis and Caries Treatment’ completed by 547 practitioners who belong to The Dental Practice-Based Research Network (DPBRN), a consortium of participating practices and dental organizations.

Results: Sixty-nine percent of DPBRN dentists perform CRA on their patients. Recently graduated dentists, dentists with busier practices, and those who believe a dentist can predict future caries were the most likely to use CRA. The association between CRA and individualized prevention was weaker than expected \((r = 0.21)\). Dentists who perform CRA provide ICP to 57% of their patients, compared with 42% for dentists who do not perform CRA. Based on their responses to radiographic and clinical scenarios in the questionnaire, dentists who use CRA appear to use this information in restorative decisions.

Conclusion: A substantial percentage of DPBRN dentists do not perform CRA, and there is not a strong linkage between its use and use of individualized preventive regimens for adult patients. More progress in the implementation of current scientific evidence in this area is warranted.

Key Words

adults, caries, cariology, prevention, risk assessment