



Pediatric Dentists' knowledge, attitudes, and predictors of HPV anticipatory guidance

Kayla Jang, DMD, Elizabeth Best, MPH, Malvin Janal, PhD, Lauren Feldman, DMD, MPH

Department of Pediatric Dentistry, New York University College of Dentistry, NY

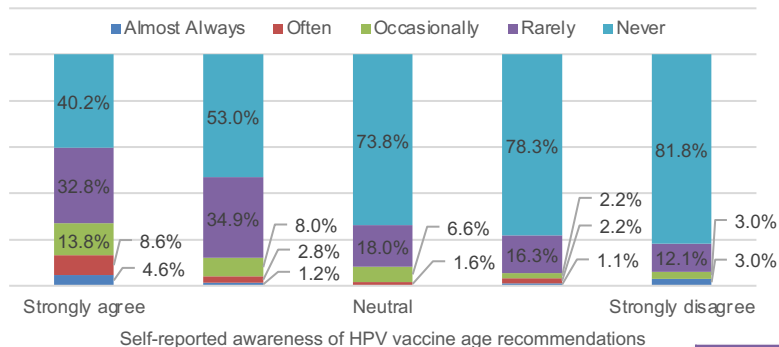
Introduction

Seventy percent of oropharyngeal cancers in the US are attributed to human papilloma virus (HPV) infection. The HPV vaccine protects against high-risk HPV strains that cause oropharyngeal cancers. HPV education and the quality of healthcare provider recommendation have been shown to be the biggest predictors in whether a parent will vaccinate their child. Evidence suggests that adolescents who had a dental visit in the last year had increased odds of being vaccinated for HPV and that parents are comfortable having discussions about HPV and the vaccine with their dentists. Secondary recommendations in the dental office may increase vaccine uptake. Policy statements from the ADA and AAPD support measures to prevent oral and oropharyngeal cancers (OOPC), including the prevention of HPV infection through providing anticipatory guidance for OOPC, HPV, and HPV vaccination in the dental setting. In a survey conducted to ADA Association Clinical Evaluators (ACE) Panel member dentists, 25% discuss the HPV vaccine with eligible patients or parents or guardians. The purpose of this study is to evaluate pediatric dentists' current knowledge, practices, and attitudes towards the integration of HPV education and anticipatory guidance.

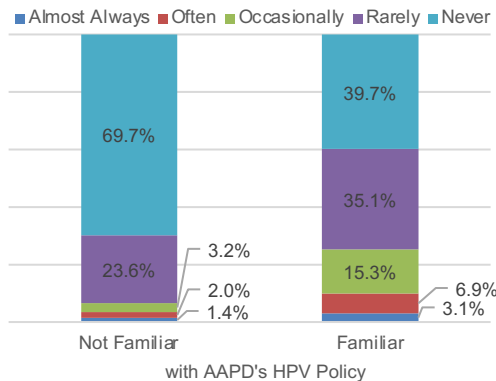
Methods

The survey instrument was developed following a review of the literature and was adapted from Patton et al with permission from the American Dental Association (Copyright © 2020 American Dental Association. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission). The survey link was emailed to 7,931 pediatric dentists and pediatric dental residents who are currently practicing/ in training and are members of the AAPD. Data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS (v28).

Familiarity with HPV vaccine age recommendations and HPV guidance discussion frequency



Familiarity with AAPD's HPV Policy and HPV guidance discussion frequency



Results

609 pediatric dentists and pediatric dental residents completed the survey. 43% of respondents were familiar with the AAPD HPV policy statement. 21.3% reported regularly (i.e., more than half the time) asking patients if they are up to date on vaccinations (including HPV) and documented HPV vaccination status into electronic health records. 6.2% reported regularly providing HPV vaccination anticipatory guidance. Increased regular provision of HPV anticipatory guidance was correlated with increased familiarity with the AAPD Policy on HPV Vaccinations, agreement with receiving adequate post-doctoral training, higher HPV knowledge, higher self assessment of HPV knowledge, and greater self-reported awareness of the age recommendations for the HPV vaccination (all $p < 0.05$). Reasons that participants gave for not discussing HPV vaccination included the feeling that these discussions are best left to other healthcare professionals (45.9%), time constraints (40.2%), not knowing how to address the topic (38.6%), and HPV vaccination status not being included in electronic health records (31.5%).

Reasons the HPV vaccine is not discussed with patients	Percentage (%)
The topic is best left to other healthcare professionals (e.g., PCP)	45.9
Time constraints do not allow me to have this discussion	40.2
I/we don't know how to address the topic	38.6
It is not included in my electronic health record system	31.5
Lack of private location in my practice to have this discussion	24.0
I/we forget to ask about HPV vaccines but would like to ask more often	23.8
I/we are uncomfortable discussing HPV as a sexually transmitted infection	22.0
I/we do not feel my patient population would be receptive to this discussion	21.6
The politicization of the COVID-19 vaccine has made me uncomfortable having conversations about vaccinations	15.0
Other	5.8
I/we didn't know adolescents ages 9-17 were eligible for the HPV vaccine	1.8
I/we do not believe the HPV vaccine is safe and/or effective	0.9

Conclusions

Increased awareness of the AAPD Policy on HPV Vaccinations and increased post-doctoral training may increase the likelihood that pediatric dental providers recommend the HPV vaccine to their patients. Even with increased awareness and training, however, barriers are likely to persist.



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