

Dental Students' Perception and Their Performance in Clinical Components of Final Year Examination during and Prior to COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world into a health and economic crisis interrupting numerous regular routine activities including education. Continuing dental education in clinical training and assessments is a challenge during COVID-19 pandemic. Objective of this study was to assess the perception and performance of dental students on clinical component of the final year examination held during COVID-19 pandemic. Final year dental undergraduates (n=86) participated in the study. A pre tested, self-administered questionnaire (online Google form) was used to assess their perception with regard to knowledge, attitude and fear when participating in a changed clinical set up. Percentage marks obtained for each clinical component was used to assess their performance during and prior to the pandemic. The mean scores for knowledge, attitude and fear were 82%, 94% and 77% respectively. There was no statistical significance in the perception regarding the clinical set up for prosthetic dentistry ($p=0.317$) and restorative dentistry ($p=0.384$) when students performing during and prior to COVID-19 pandemic were compared. However, a statistically significant difference was observed for oral surgery component ($p=0.005$) for the same. There was no significant correlation between the perception scores and the students' performance for all three clinical components. (Spearman $r \approx 0.000$, p -value = 0.998). Similarly no significant correlation was found between actual performance and the statements 'they could have performed better'; 'needed more time' (Spearman $r \approx 0.057$, p -value = 0.742) (spearman $r \approx -0.023$, p -value = 0.778) were considered. Students' knowledge and attitude related to clinical components during COVID-19 pandemic is satisfactory. Assessments involving direct patient contact can be implemented with proper planning, patient selection and under recommended infection control guidelines. Students' performance was not significantly affected by their perception or subjective opinion in all three clinical components.

Keywords: Dental education, Perception, Assessments, COVID-19 pandemic