

Clinical audit of patients' and operators' experience on root canal treatments done under rubber dam

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Rubber dam has been in use for effective isolation of the root canal and operating field from salivary bacteria. The most frequent arguments against rubber dam are that patients generally do not like it and the prolonged time of treatment. However, according to several studies, the attitude of patients and operators towards rubber dam is rather positive.

The aims of this audit were to record patients' and operators' views of their experience of rubber dam use, to evaluate and compare post-treatment complications and its acceptance by patients.

Information regarding patient and operator experience on rubber dam use in root canal treatment was obtained via a self-administered questionnaire completed by the operating final-year dental students at Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya. The data were evaluated by using SPSS 20.0. Analyses were confined to simple cross-tabulations of the patient's and operator's responses and percentage values for responses were drawn. Rubber dams were placed on 77.8% of the cases excluding 22.2% due to difficulty in placement and practical reasons such as loss of coronal portion of teeth. 65.3% of the patients' attitude was that it was not an unpleasant experience while 34.7% found it as an unpleasant experience. Only 3.57% patients developed any post-treatment complications within two weeks of the procedure while 6.25% of the cases where rubber dam was not placed developed some kind of complications such as pain, swelling, fever, sinus tract and crown fracture. Only 23.6% of the patients have undergone a previous root canal treatment. Of these 75% responded that the previous procedure was not comfortable compared to the current procedure. The patients generally showed a positive attitude towards the rubber dam use and the operator experience was that irrigation with Sodium Hypochlorite during the procedure was rather easy with the aid of the rubber dam. Only a low number of cases developed post-operative complications.