

## **Attitude of primary school teachers on prevention of dental caries among primary school students and their influence on practice in the Nallur Educational Division, Jaffna.**

Jithusman S,<sup>1</sup>Geerthana N,<sup>1</sup> Kumar R,<sup>2</sup>Balakumar S,<sup>3</sup>Coonghe PAD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

<sup>3</sup>*Regional Director of Health Services Office, Kilinochchi*

**Background:** Dental caries is one of the common oral health problem in children and it is preventable. Teachers are suitable person to give awareness as children spend more time with their school teachers. Although knowledge, attitude and practice of oral health problems of school children among primary school teachers have been assessed in many parts of world, including in South Asian countries, no studies related to this have been done in Sri Lanka. Hence, this study was undertaken to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of school teachers towards prevention of dental caries. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude of primary school teachers on prevention of dental caries among primary school students and their influence on practice in the Nallur Educational Division, Jaffna.

**Methods:** This was school based descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among 251 primary class teachers from 35 schools, in Nallur Educational Division. A self-administered questionnaire was used to assess knowledge, attitude, and practice of primary school teachers on prevention of dental caries. All data collected was entered in SPSS version 23.0 and data analysis was done. Descriptive statistics were used, graphs and tables were generated, and the Chi Square test was used to determine the influence of knowledge and attitude on practice of primary school teachers in preventing dental caries.

**Results:** In this study 97 %, teachers agreed that teachers can play a role in dental caries prevention.. Around 83% of teachers agreed that teachers should check their students' oral cavities. And 98% of them agreed oral health education should be included in the school curriculum. Eighty-four percentage teachers agreed that all teachers must have training in oral health education. Around 96% of teachers agreed that teachers should give oral health education to their students. Among teachers 95.1% of them have a practice of monitoring the food pattern of their students. Instructions on brushing technique to students has been given by 92.7% of primary school teachers. About 64% of teachers have checked the oral cavity of students in their class. And 87.8% of teachers attended an oral health education session held by the school dental therapist.

**Conclusion:** The attitude of teachers on prevention of dental caries was unsatisfactory. Half of the participated teachers had good practice towards prevention of dental caries. Therefore, oral health education and training must be given to teachers on a regular basis and further studies must be done to assess the awareness level on prevention of dental caries.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Dental caries, primary schools, Jaffna, Teachers