

# The Most Common Presenting Complaints of the Patients Attending Department of Operative Dentistry, Nishtar Institute of Dentistry, Multan

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The describe the most common presenting complaint of the patients coming to the Department of Operative Dentistry, Nishtar Institute of Dentistry, Multan.

**Methods:** This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in the Department of Operative Dentistry, Nishtar Institute of Dentistry, Multan, from January 2013 to March 2013. Detailed history of the patient's presenting complaint and examination findings were recorded. All the data was entered in SPSS-20 and results were analyzed.

**Results:** This study included 1500 patients and among them 50.1% were male and 49.9% female. The most common presenting complaint of the patients (40.7%) was sensitivity and food lodgment in upper and lower posterior teeth. Pain in upper and lower posterior teeth (29.5%), post filling complaint in upper and lower posterior teeth (8.9%) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most common presenting complain respectively. Esthetic problem in upper and lower anterior teeth was noted in 1.8% patients and 1% patients had pain in upper and lower anteriors.

**Conclusion:** Most common presenting complaints of the patients are sensitivity and food lodgment and pain in upper and lower posterior teeth which are caused by initial carious lesion and it is due to lack of fluoridated water and toothpastes.

**Keywords:** Operative dentistry, sensitivity in teeth, food lodgment in teeth, pain, esthetic problem

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## INTRODUCTION

Presenting complaint of the patients is one of the most common indicators of health behavior which will ultimately impact on the oral health. According to WHO oral health report 2003, oral diseases have a considerable impact on individual and communities, as a result of pain and suffering, impairment of function and reduced quality of life.<sup>1</sup> There is also an increased demand for oral health care which was also confirmed by the epidemiological study carried out in South west Burkina Faso.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, rapid changes have occurred in the pattern of oral diseases across countries.<sup>3</sup> In other parts of the World a patient comes to the dentist with the most common presenting complaint of pain.<sup>4</sup> A study at the Department of Pediatric Dentistry Clinic at the University of Nairobi Dental Hospital<sup>4</sup> shows that the presenting complaint for most patients was dental pain (31.5%), orthodontic related complaints (25.4%) and dental decay (19.7%).

Nishtar institute Of Dentistry is located in an urban area and the urban poor people in Multan city live in a crowded, with very poor or non-existing

sanitation facilities and undesirable environment particularly around the railway line, slums and in the areas of old city.<sup>5</sup> A study of the low income patients in Australia shows that the main problem was with their natural teeth (89.6%), of those with natural teeth problems, 41.3% have had pain disturbing their sleep patterns and 14.7% have had experienced swelling.<sup>6</sup>

This study is the first of its type which is carried out to check the most common presenting complaint of the patients attending Department of Operative Dentistry. It is carried out in Nishtar institute of dentistry Multan, which is a tertiary care dental set-up that provides dental health care facilities primarily to the city of Multan and generally to the entire region of southern Punjab.<sup>7</sup> The institute receives about 70000 patients annually from all parts of southern Punjab Pakistan.

## PATIENTS AND METHODS

A three months study, from January 2013 to March 2013, was conducted in the Department of Operative Dentistry. As a standard protocol of the Institute, upon arrival, each patient's presenting complaint and history of presenting complaints was taken by the team carrying out the research project, prior to their examination for further dental treatment. Complete privacy was provided to the patients. After taking history, examination was made by dental surgeon on

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dental unit with the help of probe and dental mirror. All the patients attending the department were above 15 years of age. All the data was entered in SPSS-20 and results were analysed.

## RESULTS

Data of 1500 patients was analysed, of which 50.1% were male and 49.9% female. The most common presenting complaint of patients was sensitivity and food lodgement in upper and lower posterior region of oral cavity and 611(40.7%) patients were presented with this problem. Out of those presenting with sensitivity, 579 had only sensitivity and food lodgement and remaining 32 patients had more than one presenting complaint (Table 1). The 2<sup>nd</sup> common presenting complaint was pain in upper and lower posterior region and 443(29.5%) patients were presented in the department with this complaint. Out of these 443 patients, 234 had single complaint of pain in upper and lower posterior region and 209 had more than one presenting complaint in which pain was the main complaint. The third common presenting complaint was post-filling complaint and was noted in 133(8.9%) patients. Out of these 133 patients, 3 patients were noted to have more than one presenting complaint. Aesthetic problem in upper and lower anterior teeth was found in 28(1.8%) patients and 25 of them had only aesthetic problem and other 3 patients had other problems as well. Pain in upper and lower anterior teeth were less common and were observed in only 15 (1%) patients. Besides these problems, 263(17.5%) patients had problems other than discussed above. High rate of dental problems was observed in age group of 26-50 years and out of total 1500 patients, 838 (55.9%) presented in this age group. Second common age group with dental problems was at the age of 15-25 years and 596(39.7%) patients were found in this age group. Third age group with patients above the age of 50 years was having least dental problems related to operative dentistry (Table 2). Regarding the socio-economic status of the patients in this study, it was noted that 75.4% of the patients belonged to middle income group, 21.9 % to the low-income group and just 2.2% patients to the high-income group (Table 3). Systemic problems of the patients were also inquired during the complete history taking process and 1087 (72.5%) patients did not report any systemic problem. The most common systemic problem reported, was allergy to any sort of medications, food or pollens. Out of 78 (5.2%) patients with allergy, 53 had only allergy and 25 patients had other systemic problems as well. Hypertension was second common medical problem in our patients and it was found in 4.7% cases.

Prevalence of hypertension was almost among the age group of 26-50 years. Other systemic problems included hepatitis/jaundice in 3.1%, peptic ulcer in 2.9%, migraine in 2%, anemia in 1.4%, asthma in 1.3%, pregnancy in 0.6%, and 3.3% patients had systemic problems other than that (Table 4). Treatment trend was very much higher among urban people and 91.3% patients were from urban areas. Just 0.8% patients were from rural areas and 7.9% patients were from suburban areas (Table 5). It is interesting to note that only 26 (1.7%) patients reported diabetes and almost all were at 26-50 years of age. Only 12 (0.8%) patients reported cardiac problems of any sort.

Table 1: Frequency of complaints

Present complaint	No.	%
Sensitivity and food lodgement in upper and lower posterior	611	40.7
Pain in upper and lower posterior	430	28.6
Others	225	15.0
Post filling complaints in upper and lower posterior	155	10.4
Aesthetic problems in upper and lower anterior	52	3.5
Sensitivity in upper and lower anterior	27	1.8

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of ages

Age (years)	No.	%
15 – 25	596	39.7
26 – 50	838	55.9
> 50	66	4.4

Table 3: Socio-economic status of the patients

Socio-economic status	No.	%
Middle income	1131	75.4
Poor	329	21.9
Rich	33	2.2
Very rich	7	0.5

Table 4: Systemic problems according to age

Systemic problem	Age (years)		
	15 - 25	26 - 50	> 50
None	464	582	37
Hypertension	8	50	13
Cardiac problem	2	7	3
Others	25	22	2
Allergy	28	48	2
Peptic ulcer/Gastric problem	12	32	-
Hepatitis/Jaundice	18	28	-
Diabetes	1	23	2
Migraine	14	14	1
Anaemia	9	12	-
Asthma	3	15	1
Pregnancy	6	3	-

Table 5: Frequency of patients belonged areas

Area	No.	%
Rural	12	0.8
Urban	1369	91.3
Sub-urban	119	7.9

## DISCUSSION

A total of 1500 patients were presented to operative dentistry department during the study period from all parts of the Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The study evaluated that asymptomatic dental clinic attendance was not common; attendances were mostly due to sensitivity of teeth and it was the most common presenting complaint accounting for 40.7% of the patients. Lower prevalence of teeth sensitivity was found in studies conducted in China<sup>8</sup> and Bangkok Thailand<sup>9</sup> resulting the prevalence of 25.5% and 30.7% respectively. Similarly a study<sup>10</sup> at Chinese adults showed the prevalence of Dentine hypersensitivity to be 34.1%. However according to a study in Burkina Faso<sup>11</sup>, a high proportion (62.1%) of people reported the experience of toothache caused by hot, cold or sweet items. Above analysis shows that sensitivity is more common in developing countries and less common in developed countries. It is also noted that initial carious also causes sensitivity that's why sensitivity is more common in our study, as there is lack of fluoridated water and fluoridated toothpastes which are more common in developed countries. According to a study, WHO<sup>12</sup> recommends for public health that every effort must be made to develop affordable fluoridated toothpastes for use in developing countries.

In our study the prevalence of dental pain was 2<sup>nd</sup> most common presenting complaint of the patients (29.5%). Lower prevalence of dental pain was seen in studies carried out in United States of America<sup>13</sup> and Sri Lanka<sup>14</sup> being 14.5% and 23% respectively. However higher prevalence of 34% was reported in a study carried out in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup> An equal ratio of males and females were presented in our study. However in most of the other studies, more females were presented as compared to males because of dental problems.<sup>2,14</sup> Two hypotheses can be made in order to show the association of pain with female gender. (1) The prevalence of caries and tooth losses, when measured by the DMF-T Index, are associated with pain and are more common in females. (2) Women use health services more than men, and submitted to a greater number of dental interventions and procedures.

It is the obligation of a dentist not only to provide care and treatment for the presenting complaints of the patients but also to make them aware of any other condition that is diagnosed during a routine dental examination. Our study showed that the

proportion of the patients who had presented with post filling problems were 8.9%. It is to notice that patients concerned about aesthetics were very few and only 1.8% patients were received with the presenting complaint of aesthetic problems however 5% patients were received due to aesthetic problems in a study carried out at Tanzania.<sup>16</sup> This shows that people are less concerned about their aesthetics in our country.

It is important to note that most of the patients in our study visited the hospital in the late stages of painful oral disease. So it is assumed that our study reflects only the tip of an iceberg that represents a much larger need for emergency care in the population. Any strategy aiming to be effective in improving oral health should at least meet the emergency dental needs of the population. Consequently there is a definite need of data on dental treatment demands and wants for adequate planning of dental health care systems in their infancy in countries with limited financial resources like Pakistan. So surveys about DMFT of school going children should be planned to know actual oral health status of population.

Most of the patients did not reported any medical problem in our study however it is important to note that prevalence of hypertension and diabetes in other studies is much more higher as compared to ours study. In studies carried out in Nigeria<sup>17</sup>, and west Indies<sup>18</sup>, prevalence of hypertension among the dental patients was about 19.7% and 12.6% respectively. As compared to our study which shows just 4.7% patients to be hypertensive. Similarly very few patients (1.7%) had diabetes in our study whereas the percentage is much higher in West Indies (6.1%). It is assumed that medical problems are much more common among our patients but most of them are unaware of the diseases.

## CONCLUSION

This study describes that most common presenting complaints of the patients are sensitivity and food lodgement and pain in upper and lower posterior teeth which are caused by initial carious lesion and it is due to lack of fluoridated water and toothpastes. Asymptomatic and routine dental check-up is not a trend in the area and not a single patient was presented for routine check-up.

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