Introduction

- COVID-19 is a highly infectious virus that became a pandemic in January 2020.
- The respiratory pathogen, SARS-CoV-2, has been identified as the causative agent.
- Worldwide, dentists have been severely affected as they are in close contact to patients and saliva.
- COVID-19 displays flu-like symptoms and respiratory problems. With the onset of the pandemic, new regulations to the dental profession have been implemented.

Objective

- To investigate COVID-19 and infection control amongst dentists in Trinidad and Tobago.
- To assess COVID-19 and dentists’ awareness.
- To assess COVID-19 and dentists’ perception and attitude.
- To assess the impact of COVID-19 on dental practices.

Methodology

- The survey was conducted after obtaining ethical approval from The University of The West Indies ethics committee (Ref: CREC-SA.0676/01/2020).
- A cross-sectional survey using a self-administered questionnaire containing both open and close ended questions was the main form of obtaining data.
- A pilot survey was conducted on 12 dentists to ensure the comprehension and clarity of the questions.
- The survey was then emailed to the 587 registered dentists using an anonymous online survey platform known as Survey Planet.
- Data was collected from February 9 to April 9 2021. The data was analyzed using the SPSS 27 software.

Discussion

Awareness

- Most dentists attended seminars to expand their knowledge about the COVID-19 virus.
- Dentists indicated that the new preventative protocols aided in controlling the spread of the virus. This was due to their awareness on the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Knowledge

- There was disagreement regarding the most common symptoms of COVID-19.
- Most dentists correctly selected the most common symptoms; they also included some of the less common symptoms from their respond.
- There was disagreement among the participants regarding the survivability of the COVID-19 virus on inanimate objects.

Attitude and Impact

- Dentists agreed to suspend their dental practice in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Dentists who opted to continue working saw only emergency procedures being conducted at their practices as mandated by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

Conclusion

- Awareness was consistent regarding preventative measures, routes of transmission and incubation period for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- Campaigns and seminars are required to educate dental professionals on COVID-19.
- Rehabilitation services to allow dentists to function in their clinics should be instituted for dentists in Trinidad and Tobago.

References


Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our greatest thank you to our supervisors Dr. T. Hoyte and Dr.A.Kowlesser for guiding us through this project. Additionally we would like to thank all our participants who would have answered our questionnaire being a key factor in this study.