

Initial treatment of traumatic dental injuries by dental practitioners

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the nature of initial treatment provided by dental practitioners to children aged 1–17 years with various types of traumatic dental injuries at public dental clinics in Tanzania. Questionnaires on initial treatment were mailed to 188 practitioners and returned by 138 (73%). The reported treatments were analyzed in relation to the dental practitioners' qualifications and area of practice. Extraction of injured teeth was frequently reported for 64% of the injuries and prescription of antibiotics was reported by 67%, 48% and 46% of the practitioners for soft tissue injuries, concussion, and alveolar fracture respectively. Practitioners working at the Faculty of Dentistry were less involved in treating dental trauma than those at urban and rural clinics ($P = 0.001$), while no significant association was found with the level of education of the practitioners. Equal proportions of practitioners, about one-third each, reported correct, unnecessary and wrong treatment options. The quality of the treatments provided could not be explained by background variables. It can be concluded that dental practitioners in Tanzania provide a lot of over-treatment for traumatic dental injuries. Therefore, it is suggested that efforts should be made to improve and standardize treatment methods in Tanzania.