Dental caries is an international challenging problem in which the diet, host, and microbial flora interact over a period of time in such a way so as to encourage the demineralization of the tooth enamel with resultant caries formation.\[1\] Evidence increasingly suggests that for successful prevention of caries, preventive interaction should begin with the 1\textsuperscript{st} year of life.\[2\]

Children <5 years of age visit a pediatrician more often than they do a dental doctor. Hence, pediatricians are well placed to begin the process of early assessment of oral health and provision of anticipatory guidance and educating the parents regarding good oral hygiene, prevention of dental injuries, and establishing proper feeding habits.\[3\]

The aim of this study is to evaluate the awareness of pediatricians about infant oral health care in and around Kanchipuram district.

**Materials and Methods**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among pediatricians in and around Kanchipuram district. Pediatricians list was obtained from IMA Kanchipuram. Pretested, structured, and self-administered questionnaire was used in the survey.\[^9\] Their knowledge and attitude toward prevention of dental caries were assessed based on demands about their role in promoting oral health, assessment of dental caries during routine well-child care, and curriculum in pediatric postgraduation to upgrade oral health. The collected data
were tabulated, and percent frequency distributions for responses to every question were assessed and presented in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

Dental disease is one of the most vulnerable chronic disease affecting children throughout the world. Preventive dentistry is yet to be in common practice as that are seldom cared about by the parents and because of the lack of knowledge about with the medical professionals as well. Pediatricians and family physicians are renowned for effects on the oral health of children because of their early health visits.

None of the participants reported that pediatricians are responsible for infant oral health presumes that pediatricians are not examining the oral cavity as a part of routine. Early recognition of dental caries and prophylactic measures against dental problems prevents from infection, dietary problems, missed school days, and poor quality of life as too.

Most of them never recommended any time limit for continuation of bottle feeding. Feeding patterns such as bottle feeding beyond 1 year, children allowed to bed with nursing bottle are responsible for an increase in the exposure of primary dentition to fermentable carbohydrates. This increase favors both an early colonization by oral mutans streptococci and due to increase in the number of these microorganisms in the dental plaque and saliva, which increases the risk of developing caries.[5]

A pediatrician should know the need of treatment and preservation of milk teeth for a healthy permanent dentition,[6] which matches with our findings where pediatricians agreed that milk teeth are important. About 70% of the pediatricians were discussed with the parents about baby bottle tooth decay. If teeth are infected or lost too early due to baby bottle tooth decay, the child may develop speech problems, poor eating habits, and crooked teeth.

In our study, only a very few of them (7%) have done the nutritional counseling. According to American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the child should come for the visit within 6 months of the eruption of the first teeth.[7] Nutritional counseling is a cooperative mode of interaction between patients and health-care providers aimed at insisting patients in adopting healthy dietary behaviors.

Graph 1 shows that all of them agreed for the establishment of dental home along with medical home, in our study reported the essentiality in providing improved quality of dental health. Almost all of them felt that the need for dental educational program and to publish the dental articles in medical journals to promote the familiarity with oral health issues for prevention of dental caries. However, there are certain barriers to the involvement of pediatricians in this process, some of which include insufficient time during appointments and lack of discussion between health professionals in the field of dentistry and medicine.[8]

Conclusion

From this study, we conclude that there is a lack of awareness about prevention of dental caries among pediatricians in Kanchipuram

| Table 1: Knowledge, attitude and role of pediatricians towards oral health care |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Question number** | **Questions** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| 1 | Responsible for infant oral health care | 0 | Pedodontist | 3 | Both | 51 | 94 |
| 2 | Time duration till bottle-feed continued | 1 year | 5 | 9 | 2 years | 4 | 7 | Never recommended | 45 | 84 |
| 3 | Are milk teeth important | Yes | 50 | 93 | No | 4 | 7 |
| 4 | Evaluate for any oral pathology | Yes | 7 | 13 | No | 47 | 87 |
| 5 | Examine for dental decay | Yes | 4 | 7 | No | 50 | 93 |
| 6 | Discuss baby bottle tooth decay with the parents | Yes | 38 | 70 | No | 16 | 30 |
| 7 | Educate parents about prevention of tooth decay | Yes | 15 | 28 | No | 39 | 72 |
| 8 | Patients referral to a dentist when dental problem occurs | General dentist | 49 | 91 | Pedodontist | 5 | 9 |
| 9 | Nutritional counseling (particularly to dental caries) | Yes | 4 | 7 | No | 50 | 93 |
| 10 | Agree for dental home establishment along with medical home | Yes | 1 | 2 | No | 53 | 98 |
| 11 | Felt the need for dental educational program on oral health of children | Yes | 54 | 100 | No | 0 |
| 12 | Felt the need to publish preventive dentistry articles in medical journals | Yes | 45 | 83 | No | 9 | 17 |

Graph 1: Opinion of the pediatricians about conducting dental education program, publishing dental articles in medical journals, dental with medical home together
district. To overcome these following principles are recommended. Group practice of pediatricians and dentists is vital, including preventive dentistry topics in the medical curriculum. Advocating dentists as part of well-child care and establishing dental home along with medical home publishing pediatric journals concerning about the oral health to improve the knowledge is also essential in promoting a good oral health hygiene.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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