

Attitudes and Behaviors of Dentists in Texas, USA towards Teledentistry: A Survey

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Objectives: Post-pandemic dentistry is shifting, with technology and convenience taking the lead. Healthcare professionals are using alternative methods of communication such as telehealth. According to the American Dental Association, 42% of adults don't visit a dentist as often as they should, mostly due to financial and time limitations in this modern, fast-paced world. Teledentistry can help bridge the gap between dentists and those seeking dental treatment.

Methods: An online survey (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) of 23 Likert scale and categorical questions was created and sent to over 1,200 dentists in the state of Texas via e-mail. Likert scale responses were statistically analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test and significant differences among categorical responses were statistically analyzed using Pearson's chi-squared and Fisher's exact tests.

Results: 196 responses to the survey were obtained. Most respondents were general dentists aged 45 to 54 years of age. While most respondents had heard of teledentistry, only 9.2% practiced it. 74% were unaware of the existence of ADA codes of D9995 and D9996, effective since 2018 for teledentistry reporting. 59.8% of respondents disagreed the standard of care can be achieved through teledentistry, with most viewing teledentistry as a good screening tool that does not replace a patient in-person visit. Despite 68.8% believing its use should be saved for dental emergencies, 80.3% of dentists agreed teledentistry will continue to grow in use, with 46.3% planning to use the services in the future.

Conclusion: Contrary to physicians and telemedicine, dentists practicing teledentistry in Texas are a minority. While many dentists seem interested in practicing it, many are unaware of the exact services teledentistry encompasses and how to bill them. With new pandemics looming and life expectancy and existence of underserved areas increasing; dental students and clinicians alike need more education on teledentistry.

This study was supported by the UTSD Student Research Program.