

Clinical audit on post-operative defaulter rate following comprehensive dental treatment under general anaesthesia at 6 months in Hospital Taiping

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Patients with Early Childhood Caries (ECC) who receive Comprehensive Dental Treatment (CDT) performed under general anaesthesia must be recalled for a follow-up visit to minimize the risk of relapse. The post-operative out-patient appointment defaulter rate poses substantial adverse clinical implications to the patients as well as financial consequences for the Malaysia Ministry of Health (MOH). The aim of this audit was to quantify the percentage of defaulters at a paediatric dental clinic in a tertiary hospital and to implement appropriate interventions to reduce the defaulter rate. **Methods:** The study was carried out in 2 cycles. In cycle 1, the number of patients who defaulted the 6-month plus 1-week post-operative recall visit was established for all appointments scheduled from March to May. The study was then repeated in Cycle 2 following telephone reminders to a total of 26 patients due to attend the clinic in the week preceding their appointment date. The defaulter rates in the two limbs of the completed audit cycle were then compared. **Results:** The Cycle 1 result revealed a defaulter rate of 45.8%, with more males than females failing to attend. In Cycle 2, the non-attendance rate fell to 26.9% although this was not a significant reduction. The defaulter rate in the post-intervention limb improved but did not achieve the state standard key-performance index of $\leq 20\%$. **Conclusion:** Telephoning patients before their appointments is labour-intensive and did not significantly improve the defaulter rate. Future work is necessary to establish the causes of non-attendance to deliver more effective and applicable solutions.