

A Practice-based Assessment of UK Patients' Knowledge of Dental Materials

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this practice-based study was to determine the level of knowledge that patients have on dental materials using practitioner (GDP) members of a UK-wide Practice-Based Research Group, The PREP Panel (Product Research and Evaluation by Practitioners), established in 1993, and has presently 32 members, has completed over 80 projects, and published over 50 papers (15 in peer-reviewed journals) reporting handling evaluations and clinical trials carried out by the group.

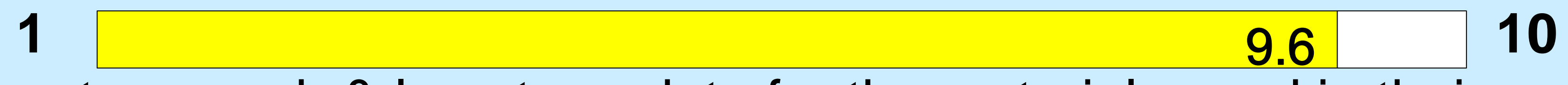
METHOD

After obtaining ethical approval, all members of the PREP Panel were asked if they would be prepared to recruit 25 patients to participate in a questionnaire-based assessment of patients' knowledge of dental materials. Of those who responded positively, ten members (three of whom were female) were selected. An 18-question questionnaire was designed, and this and the protocol was sent to the participating practices together with an explanatory poster for display. Interested patients were told it would take about 5 minutes to complete & were reimbursed for their time with a £5 high street voucher and a bag of oral hygiene related goods.

RESULTS

A total of 249 patients responded of whom 63% were female (n= 127). 92% (n=229) stated they were regular attenders. The largest group by age was 51-65yrs (37%), followed by the 26-50yr group (28%), and the 65+yr group (22%). The 20 -35yr group made up 9% and the under 20yr group 4%.

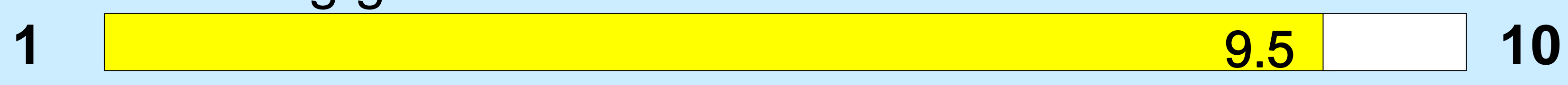
The first questions required answers on a V A S (where 1 = not important and 10 = very important) The importance of the quality of dental materials used in their mouth was rated as follows:



The importance of relevant research & long term data for the materials used in their mouth rated:



The importance of front teeth looking good was rated:



The importance of tooth-coloured fillings in back teeth rated:



- 64% (n=157) stated that their dentist gave them a choice of materials.
- 44% (n= 137) did not expect the dentist to use the same materials on NHS and private patients and 91% (n=98) of this group expected the dentist to use cheaper products on NHS patients.
- 99% of patients expected the dentist to use materials with clinical research data to support their use and a similar number expected the materials to come from an manufacturer experienced in the development & manufacture of dental products. However, 43% (n = 102) were happy for the dentist to use 'own label' products not made by a recognised dental manufacturer.
- 98% (n= 240) of respondents trusted the dentist to purchase the best products for use on their teeth.
- 69% (n= 163) of respondents stated they had no anxieties concerning the use of amalgam. Comments made by the group that did have concerns fell into 2 groups: a) Health (46 comments) and b) Cosmetic (18 comments).

The source of the respondents knowledge of dental materials and manufacturers' was as tabulated below:

Source	Number of responses	Rank
In the Daily Press	52	3
Their dentist	98	2
Staff at the dental practice	44	4
Internet	33	5
Advertising	187	1
Other*	13	6

The respondents indicated that materials used on them should have a strong evidence base and be from an experienced manufacturer. A third of respondents had anxieties in regard to the use of amalgam in their teeth.

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