

Trends in dental visits during the COVID-19 Pandemic in military dental clinics: A Retrospective Study

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted medical practices, necessitating adaptations in dental clinics. This study examines pandemic-induced changes in patient utilization of dental services to help practitioners respond effectively to future public health crises. Understanding these trends can inform healthcare planning. Dentists face high risks of infection, creating challenges in balancing dental care, particularly preventive and non-urgent procedures, with exposure prevention. This study assessed the impact of COVID-19 on monthly appointments at military dental clinics in Israel, comparing pre-pandemic data with different waves of the outbreak. Data on patient visits from January 2020 to December 2021 were analyzed using descriptive statistics. During the pandemic's peak, monthly emergency dental visits declined as COVID-19 cases rose, likely due to government prevention measures. Over time, as lockdowns eased and perceptions of infection risks changed, dental visits increased. By the end of the first wave, visit numbers returned to pre-pandemic levels. Despite this recovery, prioritizing preventive and restorative treatments is crucial for maintaining oral health. Future crises require meticulous planning, clear guidelines, and proper regulation of dental care to ensure efficient practitioner response and continued patient access to essential services.

Keywords: COVID-19, dental visits, pandemic response, healthcare adaptation

Statistical Analysis

We conducted statistical analysis using SPSS 23 statistical software. The patients were divided into five groups, including:

1. Wave 1 (March 2020- April 2020)
2. Wave 2 (June 2020- October 2020)
3. Wave 3 (December 2020- February 2021)
4. Wave 4 (June 2021- October 2021)
5. No COVID period (between the waves).

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