

NMA2/AGSM/022/DENT/001 - The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Pattern and Presentation of Traumatic Dental Injuries in Children in a Tertiary Health Institution

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Abstract

Background: Traumatic dental injuries (TDI) are often seen among children majorly due to poor balance and slow reflexes (in pre-schoolers), and poor supervision during play/sports. The COVID-19 pandemic came with adaptive changes in lifestyle with a possible impact on the incidence of traumatic dental injuries. This study was therefore aimed at comparing the presentation of traumatic dental injuries in children pre-COVID-19 pandemic and during the COVID-19 pandemic periods.

Methodology: This was a retrospective study done using clinical records of children aged 16 years and below that presented at the paediatric dental clinic of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital; March 2019 –February 2020(838) and July 2020 - June 2021(599). Information such as demographics, aetiology, type of injuries, and dentition type was elicited from the 1437 clinical records. Data were analyzed and the level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Result: One hundred and eighteen (8.2%) patients presented with TDIs [77 (9.2%) and 41(6.8%) pre-pandemic and pandemic periods, respectively], and their mean age was 7.3(± 4.3) years. There were 68 (57.6%) males. The commonest aetiology of dental injury was falling 91(77.1%) and tooth fractures 36(30.5%), respectively. There were no statistically significant differences in age ($p=0.24$), sex ($p=0.30$), aetiology ($p=0.17$), type of TDI ($p=0.10$), and dentition affected ($p=0.44$) between the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods.

Conclusion: The incidence of TDIs was higher pre-pandemic, however, there were no significant differences in the pattern of TDI between the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods; this may be due to difficulty in enforcing COVID-19 restrictions among children.

Keywords: Trauma; COVID-19; Dental injuries; Children.

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