

## Survey on the attitudes of dental hygiene students towards treating special needs and geriatric patients

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### INTRODUCTION:

The awareness of dental health as a part of general health has increased exponentially, but there are still many aspects that are untouched. In a series of reports it has been highlighted that there is a limited access of oral healthcare facilities to people with special health care.

This questionnaire-based survey assessed the attitudes of dental hygiene students towards treating special needs and geriatric patients.

### METHODS:

The present study was a questionnaire-based study conducted in the Department of Dentistry at the University of Eastern Piedmont, Vercelli, Italy. The survey included the students from dental hygiene school of the University of Eastern Piedmont. The questionnaires references were obtained from articles published in the recent past, and the questions were then precised to cover features about knowledge and attitudes of dental hygiene students regarding special need patients and geriatric patients, including a set of questions that evaluated the opinions of the students towards the existing special need and geriatric curriculum in their university.

### RESULTS:

Sixty-one students (48 females, 13 males) completed the survey.

Majority of the students (72%) agreed that special need dentistry was an important part of their education, although 55,7% stated that did not have hands on experience in treating special need patients during the dental hygiene degree. Most dental hygiene students (95,1%) agreed that geriatric dentistry was a fundamental part of their education while 57% of students reported that the geriatric program in the teaching curriculum was adequate. 75,4% reported that they were confident in treating the elderly on their own independently.

### CONCLUSIONS:

The general attitudes of dental hygiene students towards treating geriatric patients are on an acceptable level, whereas their general attitude and knowledge towards special need patients have to be considerably improved and implemented.

