

# Prevalence of ocular injuries, conjunctivitis and use of eye protection among dental personnel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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**Aims:** To find out the prevalence of ocular injury and infection among dental personnel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. **Participants:** Two hundred and four dental personnel. **Method:** A questionnaire completed by researchers and observation during practice. **Results:** The response rate was 81%. Dentists and dental technicians had a similar prevalence (42.3%) of foreign bodies in their eyes during the period of one month. Almost 50.5% of dentists rarely had foreign bodies in their eyes, while only 22.2% of dental technicians claimed the same. The majority of dental surgery assistants (73.6%) never experienced foreign bodies in their eyes. Only 27.0% of female personnel had foreign bodies in their eyes as compared to 73.0% of male personnel, while only 28.5% of females had conjunctivitis as compared to 71.4% among male personnel. 75% of regular eye protector wearers (EPW) never had foreign bodies while 67.2% EPW never had conjunctivitis. Dental technicians were more prone to ocular injury, 13.8% as compared to 4.4% of dentists. Only 30% of the regular eye protector wearers suffered ocular injury. **Conclusions:** Protection of the eyes should be emphasised and practised at undergraduate level. The awareness of eye protection should be highlighted at all clinical and research symposia. Further studies should be conducted to assess the financial implications of ocular injuries and infections in dental institutions and practices. Recommendations are made for universal precautions and the observation of safety at work guidelines by all dental team members.

*Key words:* Ocular injuries, dental personnel, dental team, occupational hazards, safety at work

The dental office can be a source of ocular injury due to mechanical, chemical, microbiological and electro-magnetic insult. Accidents resulting in injury to the eye and face of dentists, auxiliaries and the patient can occur at any time.

Recently, ocular injuries have been reported from different industrialised countries<sup>1-4</sup>. Cronstrom *et al.*<sup>1</sup>, reported from the claims submitted to the Swedish Patient Insurance Scheme that there were two cases of particles dropped into patients' eyes. McDonald *et al.*<sup>2</sup>, reported that overall, dental chairside assistants experienced a higher incidence of injuries than students both on a per worker and per time basis. Of the injuries with a low risk of cross-infection, burns and scalds from sterilising equipment, and eye injuries in the laboratories were the most common.