

HEARING PROBLEMS AMONG DENTAL PERSONNEL



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OBJECTIVE: In the practice of dentistry, dentists and dental auxiliaries are exposed to noise of different sound levels. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of hearing problems among dental personnel from Riyadh city, Saudi Arabia.

METHODS: Two hundred and four dental personnel (91 dentists, 72 dental assistants, 29 dental technicians and 12 dental hygienists) completed a questionnaire, were interviewed and observed during practice. The response rate was 82%.

RESULTS: The data obtained showed that 34 candidates (16.67%) had tinnitus, 30 (14.71%) had difficulty in speech discrimination and 63 (30.88%) had difficulty in speech discrimination in a background noise. Dental technicians were the most affected groups. The incidence of these symptoms was more in personnel exposed to dental field noise for more than 4 hours daily. None of the candidates with complaint had sought medical advice.

CONCLUSION: Hearing problems among dental personnel are not of a severe nature. However, the hearing problems can happen due to dental field noise. Dental technicians are more prone to hearing problems. It is recommended that the dental field team should wear ear protector to reduce the hazards of dental field noise.

KEYWORDS: Dental team, ergonomics, occupational hazard, tinnitus, sensory neural hearing loss, noise-induced hearing loss.