

HALITOSIS: ARE DENTISTS BEING PREPARED FOR THIS CHALLENGE? – A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY IN A DENTAL SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION: Halitosis is multifactorial and has a high prevalence. It is a very common cause of distress and may have a severe impact in one's self esteem and social life. Previous studies show that more than 75% of cases originate in the mouth.

OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the level of knowledge and attitude of students towards halitosis, and the training given at a school of dentistry.

METHODS: An anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 80 dental students at a randomly chosen Portuguese faculty, one-month before graduation, in May 2009. The overall response rate was 84%.

RESULTS: The majority of students (42%) pointed the stomach as the most frequent cause of halitosis. Subjects did not know the oral conditions that are more related (49%) and which therapeutic agents in mouthwashes are the appropriate ones to treat halitosis (55%). Moreover, the majority of students (70%) reported that they would prefer not to highlight their patients' halitosis on a routine check-up, if not requested by the patient, and that they did not feel prepared to manage these patients (72%).

CONCLUSIONS: In this study, students' knowledge, attitude and reported education on halitosis was poor. This is an original investigation, so it is not possible to compare these findings with other studies. However, considering its outcomes and the high interest from both students and patients, it is fundamental that dental schools should be committed to give their students a strong emphasis on this condition.