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A cross-sectional study on COVID-19-related changes in self-medication with antibiotics

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Dental treatments have been limited to emergency care in many countries worldwide due to the global rapid spread of coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19). Fear of contracting the disease in dental clinics has also altered the pattern of dental visits and self-medication. The present study compared self-medication with antibiotics (SMA) and the pattern of dental visits before and after the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic in a referral dental clinic in the north of Iran. The data for the present cross-sectional study was collected from 756 patient records retrieved from the archives of the Faculty Clinic of Rasht School of Dentistry during two separate periods: before the COVID-19 pandemic from mid-November 2019 to mid-February 2020 and after the pandemic emergence from mid-April to mid-July 2020. In addition to demographic variables namely age, gender, and place of residence of patients, their smoking status, chief complaint, and SMA were also extracted from patient records. The Chi-square test and binary logistic regression models with

95% confidence interval served for statistical analysis. Results: In total, 756 patient records (412 records from the pre-pandemic period and 344 records from the post-pandemic period) were evaluated. SMA was significantly more prevalent after the pandemic compared to that before pandemic (OR = 3.39, 95% CI = 2.43–4.73, $P < 0.001$). The number of patients who smoke significantly decreased after the pandemic by 6.6% compared to that in pre-pandemic period. Dental pain, pus discharge, and abscess as the chief complaints of patients were significantly more prevalent during the post-pandemic period; while dental checkups, tooth hypersensitivity, and esthetic dental problems were significantly more frequent as the chief complaints of patients during the pre-pandemic period.

Conclusion: There is indication that during the COVID-19 pandemic, SMA and prevalence of acute dental problems in patients have increased. With regard to the consequences of SMA, there is a need to raise public awareness on this matter.

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