

**Track:** Poster Session 4

## 4 - How Dentistry Survived the Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic? The Palestinian Experience.

 Saturday, April 24, 2021  2:45 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern

### Presenting Author(s)



#### **Elham Kateeb**

Associate Professor of Dental Public Health  
Al-Quds University  
Jerusalem, Palestinian Territories

**Objectives:** Dentists provide care in a proximity with patients and most of dental procedures generate aerosols and droplets. Under these conditions, dentistry had unique challenges to operate safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study assessed how Palestinian dentists survived the early months of the COVID-19.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study targeted dentists in the West Bank area of Palestine using an on-line survey during the first two weeks of May, 2020. Questions mainly asked about dentists' perception of the risks of COVID-19, readiness to reopen their clinics for routine care, and the level of confidence in dealing with suspected COVID-19 patients.

**Results:** 448 dentists completed the survey. Almost 60% believed that they were not ready to reopen their practices. Thirteen percent had "no confidence" in dealing with COVID-19 patients, while 64% had "little to moderate" confidence. Confidence was correlated negatively with increased fear of getting infected ( $\rho=-0.317$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ) and positively with years of practice ( $\rho=1.7$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Dentists who received updated training on infection control or on COVID-19 reported higher levels of confidence ( $X^2=53.8$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ,  $X^2=26.8$ ,  $p<0.0001$  respectively). Although 88% preferred not to treat COVID-19 patients, 40% were willing to provide care to them. Almost 75% reported that they were already facing financial hardships and couldn't survive financially until the end of the current month.

**Conclusions:** Data from this study highlights the fragility of private dental practice in emergency situations. Ethical, health and financial challenges that emerged during COVID-19 require dentists to adapt and be better prepared to face future crises.