



Perceptions of Breastfeeding Education among Dental Faculty and Residents



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OBJECTIVE

- To determine the current amount of time spent on breastfeeding education in dental residency programs, and the current level of comfort faculty and dental residents have in providing dental treatment to patients that are breastfeeding specifically at Texas A&M College of Dentistry.

BACKGROUND

- Human and nonhuman (formula) milk are the only options for nutrition during the first 6 months of life. Studies have demonstrated the major benefits of breastfeeding in health, nutrition, development, psychology, environment, and economy.
- The role of the pediatric dentist is to follow recent recommendations, promote breastfeeding practices and cooperate with mothers and lactation specialists when necessary to ensure a safe continuation of breastfeeding for as long as this is desired by the parent and the child.
- Oral health care providers need to be informed of the advantages of human milk and the role of breastfeeding in oral development, as well as the controversial issues that arise from prolonged breastfeeding, nocturnal breastfeeding, and breastfeeding on-demand, in association with the development of early childhood caries.⁵
- Health professionals do not always receive adequate breastfeeding education during their foundational education program to effectively help mothers.¹ The education regarding breastfeeding provided to oral health care providers is very limited or nonexistent.⁵
- Healthcare providers need to acquire a common understanding of the evidence base for breastfeeding and to understand breastfeeding as a biopsychosocial process that is dynamic, relational and that changes over time, so as to provide mothers with relevant and non-contradictory support.³

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Identified faculty and dental residents at Texas A&M University School of Dentistry were recruited through directory information and sent a link to a voluntary and anonymous survey via REDCap.
- Analysis was conducted on deidentified archived educational quality improvement surveys from faculty members and dental residents affiliated with General Dentistry and Pediatric Dentistry.
- Surveys were conducted between January 14-28 of 2026.
- A total of 23 surveys were analyzed: 16 dental residents and 7 faculty members.
- The dataset was downloaded from the Texas A&M REDCap system, and statistics were analyzed by one statistician.

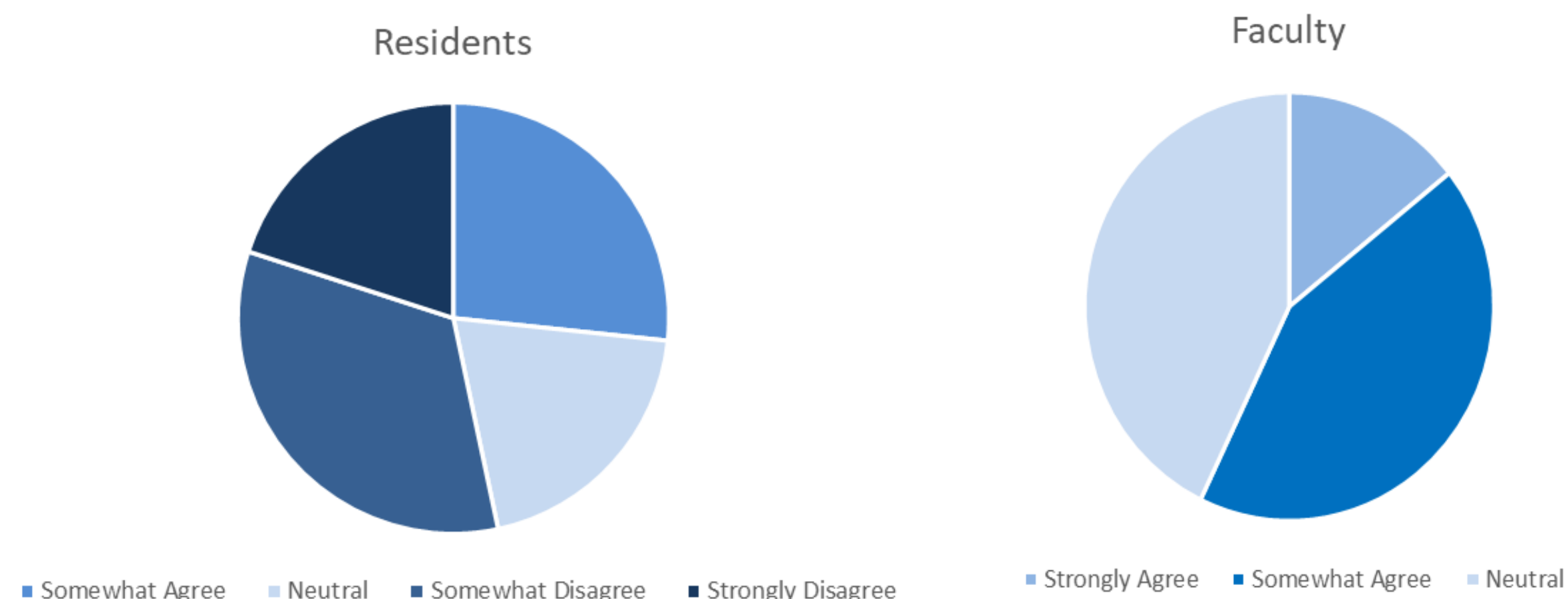
RESULTS

- Nearly 90% of residents reported that there was time specifically devoted in the program to breastfeeding education.
- Only 25% of residents feel the amount of breastfeeding education in the program is adequate.
- 75% of residents felt comfortable speaking with patients about breastfeeding with respect to oral health and growth and development.
- 81% of residents are comfortable treating patients that are breastfeeding.
- 43% of residents used some form of self-directed learning, personal experience or lectures from didactic teaching to better understand breastfeeding in the context of providing patient care.
- All survey faculty respondents viewed the incorporation of breastfeeding education in dental residency education as relevant. However, less than 60% felt as though the current amount of breastfeeding education provided in their program was adequate.

DISCUSSION

- Promoting general health in collaboration with other specialist is a major part of contemporary pediatric dentistry.⁵ Breastfeeding support from health professionals can be effective in extending the duration of breastfeeding.⁴ Health professionals are a crucial factor determining the prevalence of successful breastfeeding in a community.²
- Specialized programs that emphasize the importance of breastfeeding initiation can improve breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes and students' confidence in helping and guiding breastfeeding mothers. Thus, it is essential that health professional students have a positive attitude towards breastfeeding and are able to provide women with the basic information they require.⁶
- Without a defined curriculum, graduate students rely on personal experience, self-directed learning, and guided lectures to better understand breastfeeding in the context of providing patient care.

Perceived Adequacy of Breastfeeding Education as part of Residency Program



CONCLUSIONS

- The majority of respondents felt that breastfeeding education was relevant to dental residency education.
- The majority of respondents felt breastfeeding education provided in their program was inadequate.

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