

## Chief complaints of patients attending college of Dentistry at Mosul University

**Baceer A Abdullah**

BDS, MSc (Lect)

**Ahmad AH Al-Tuhafi**

BDS, MSc (Lect)

**Department of Oral Surgery**  
College of Dentistry, University of Mosul

### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To investigate the characteristic of patients attending College of Dentistry at Mosul University, the chief complaint which make them seeking dental treatment, and the final diagnosis of their problems. **Materials and Methods:** 760 patients attended to oral diagnosis were examined. The patients age, sex & marital state were recorded & the reason for seeking dental treatment. **Results:** The research revealed that a total of 760 patients presented to the oral diagnosis clinic in a period of about one year. Of them 41.18% were males and the remaining 58.82% were females. The single patient percentage was 55.26%, while percentage of married patients was 44.74%. The predominant age was 20-29 years age group (28.81%). The most common chief complaint was pain (34.73%). The less common complaints were: check up, esthetic, and tooth replacement with percentages of 27.5%, 18.55%, and 6.05% respectively. It was found that the frequency of esthetic and check up were higher in the youngest age groups than in the older age groups. The percentage of esthetic complaint was more in female, while pain and check up were higher in male patients. Pain complaint was higher in married patients, while check up was more frequent in single patients. Esthetic complaint was equal in both groups. **Conclusions:** It was found that the most common diagnosis was dental caries (31.97%) this followed by pulpitis (21.05%) and periapical lesion (14.07%).

**Key Words:** Chief complaint, diagnosis.

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### INTRODUCTION

The patient's diseased state should be perceived as a set of problems that must be solved.<sup>(1,2)</sup> The first step in the development of a logical treatment planning is to define the problems as they exist.<sup>(2)</sup> Definition of the problems can be achieved by thorough collection of information's from the patient by history taking.<sup>(1,3)</sup> One of the important statement in history taking is the chief complaint.

The chief complaint is a statement of why the patient consulted the dentist.<sup>(2,3,4)</sup> It is usually recorded in patient's own word to accurately reflect the patient's perception of the problem<sup>(3)</sup> Restatement of the chief complaint by the dentist may be necessary to clearly define the problem.<sup>(4)</sup>

The problem that brought the patient to the dentist is obviously a treatment priority, and the patient's chief complaint should become the dentist's chief treatment priority. Otherwise, the patient will seek treatment elsewhere.<sup>(2)</sup>

The purposes of this research were to investigate the characteristic of patients attending College of Dentistry at Mosul University, the chief complaint which make them seeking dental treatment, and the final diagnosis of their problem.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out over a period of one year extended from October 2003 to September 2004. Every patients attended to the oral diagnosis clinic in the College of Dentistry at Mosul University were included in this research.

The patient's age, sex, and marital status were recorded. They were asked about the reason(s), which make them seeking for dental treatment. When there is more than one complaint the most important one was recorded. Clinical examination was performed by using standard probe, dental mirrors with artificial light. Radiographic investigation was requested according to the demanded clinical investigation to con-

firm the diagnosis.(4) Statistical association between two variables was performed with the Chi-square test. Significant levels of  $p \leq 0.05$  and  $p \leq 0.01$  were established.

**RESULTS**

Over a one-year period, 760 patients presented to the oral diagnosis clinic, in college of Dentistry–University of Mosul, seeking for dental treatment. The patients age was ranged from 3 to 85 years, with an average of 27.2 years. Males accounted for 313 (41.18%) of the patients, whereas females accounted for 447 (58.82%). Regarding marital status, the number of single patient was 420 (55.26%), of these 107 (25.48%) were male and 313 (74.52%) were female, while the number of married patients were 340 (44.74%), of which 206 (60.59%) were male and 134 (39.41%)

were female. Figure(1) showed the distribution of patients according to age and sex groups. The predominant age was 20–29 years age group (28.81%). This was followed by 30–39 years (23.02%) and 10–19 years (19.21%) age groups. Female predominance was found in most age groups. The frequencies of chief complaints in all patients are demonstrated in Figure (2). The most common chief complaint was pain (34.73%). The less common complaints were check up, esthetic, and tooth replacement with percentages of 27.5%, 18.55%, and 6.05% respectively. Table (1) exhibits the frequencies of chief complaint according to age groups. It was found that the frequency of esthetic and check up were higher in youngest age groups than in older groups.

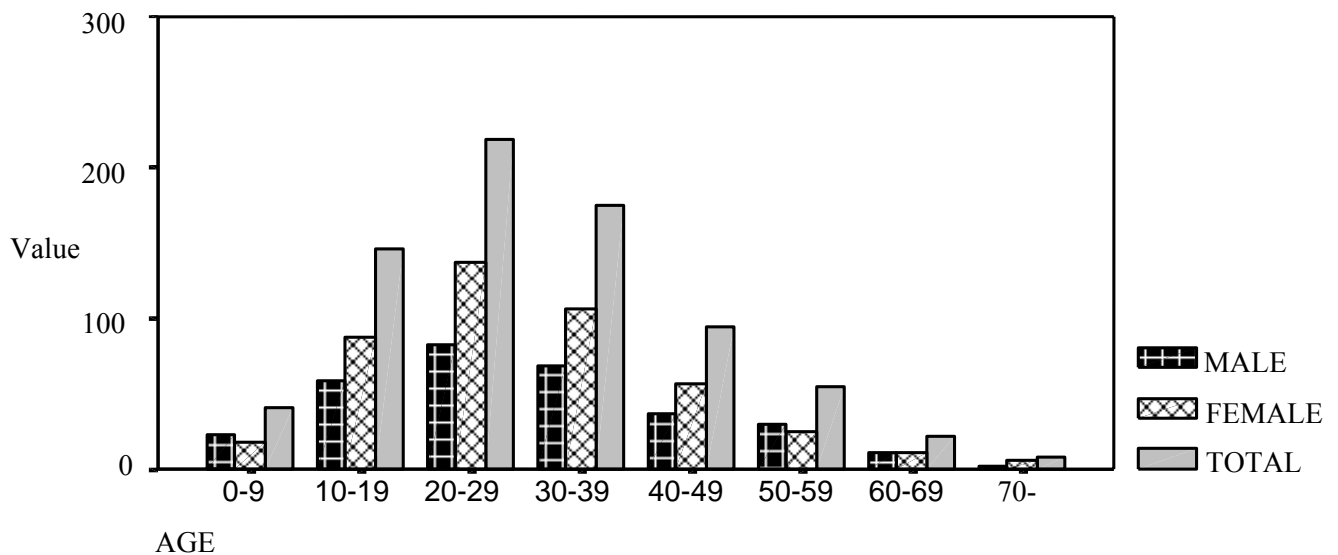


Figure (1): Distribution of Patients According to Age and Sex Groups.

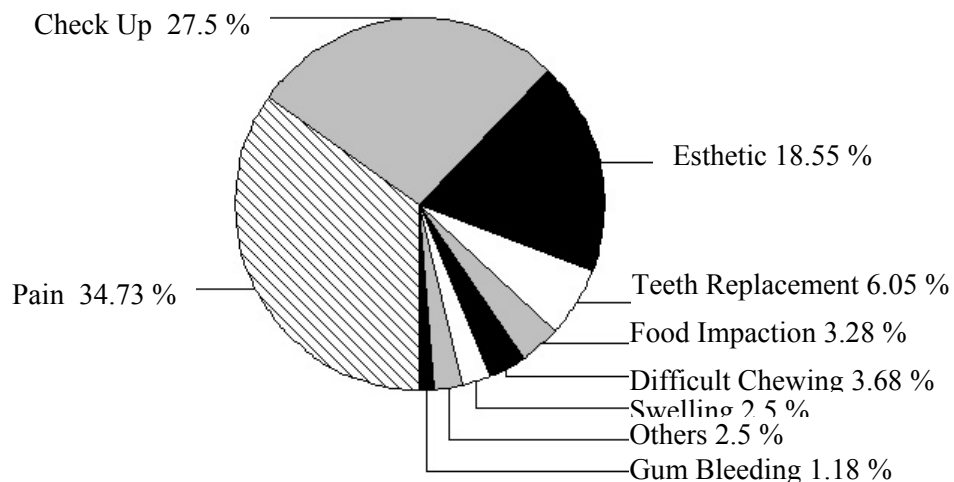


Figure (2): Frequencies of chief complaints in all patients.

Table (1): The frequencies of chief complaints in each age group.

CC.	Age groups															
	≤9		10-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-69		70 ≥	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	15	36.58	54	36.98	54	24.65	68	38.85	40	42.55	22	40.00	9	40.90	2	25
2	15	36.58	31	21.23	75	34.24	56	32.00	22	23.40	10	18.18	0	0	0	0
3	8	19.51	41	28.08	58	26.48	23	13.14	9	9.57	2	3.63	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	2	1.36	13	5.93	10	5.71	3	3.19	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	10	6.84	8	3.65	6	3.42	1	1.06	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	3	7.31	3	2.05	4	1.82	5	2.85	3	3.19	0	0	1	4.54	0	0
7	0	0	4	2.73	4	1.82	1	0.75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	1	0.68	2	0.91	1	0.75	11	11.70	14	25.45	11	50.00	6	75
9	0	0	0	0	1	0.45	5	2.85	5	5.31	7	12.72	1	4.54	0	0

CC.: Chief Complaint: 1: Pain; 2: Check up; 3: Esthetic; 4: Difficult Chewing; 5: Food impaction; 6: Swelling; 7: Gum bleeding; 8: Tooth replacement; 9: Other; No.: Number; %: Percentage.

The frequencies of chief complaint according to sex groups were shown in Table (2). In both groups the most common chief complaint was pain followed by check up and esthetic, but the percentage of esthetic complaints was more in female than in male patients and the difference was highly significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ). While the percentage of check up was higher in male than in female and the difference was significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ).

Table (3) displayed the frequencies of chief complaint according to marital state of the patients. Pain complaint was higher

in married patients than in single patients and the difference was highly significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ). While Check up was more frequent in single than in married patients and the difference was highly significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ). No difference was found regarding esthetic complaint ( $P > 0.05$ ).

The frequencies of diagnosis in all patients are shown in Table (4). It was found that the most common diagnosis was dental caries (31.97%) this followed by pulpitis (21.05%) and periapical lesion (14.07%).

Table (2): Frequencies of chief complaint according to sex groups.

Chief Complain.	Sex groups				P value
	Male (No.=313)		Female (No.=447)		
	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Pain</b>	119	38.01	145	32.43	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Check up</b>	100	31.94	109	24.38	$P < 0.05$ S
<b>Esthetic</b>	36	11.50	105	23.48	$P < 0.01$ HS
<b>Difficult Chewing</b>	16	5.11	12	2.68	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Food impaction</b>	13	4.15	12	2.68	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Swelling</b>	5	1.59	14	3.13	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Gum bleeding</b>	3	0.95	6	1.34	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Tooth replacement</b>	14	4.47	32	7.15	$P > 0.05$ NS
<b>Other</b>	7	2.23	12	2.68	$P > 0.05$ NS

No.: Number; %: Percentage.

Table (3): Frequencies of chief complaint according to marital state.

Chief Complain.	Marital status				P-value
	Single (No.=420)		Married (No.=340)		
	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Pain</b>	118	28.09	146	42.94	<i>P</i> <0.01 HS
<b>Check up</b>	138	32.85	71	20.88	<i>P</i> <0.01 HS
<b>Esthetic</b>	74	17.61	67	19.7	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS
<b>Difficult Chewing</b>	18	4.28	10	2.94	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS
<b>Food impaction</b>	22	5.23	3	0.88	<i>P</i> <0.05 S
<b>Swelling</b>	7	1.66	12	3.52	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS
<b>Gum bleeding</b>	7	1.66	2	0.58	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS
<b>Tooth replacement</b>	25	5.95	21	6.17	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS
<b>Other</b>	11	2.61	8	2.35	<i>P</i> >0.05 NS

No.: Number; %: Percentage; HS: Highly significant.

Table (4): Frequencies of final diagnosis in all patients.

Diagnosis	No.	%
<b>Caries</b>	243	31.97
<b>Pulpitis</b>	160	21.05
<b>P.A. Lesion</b>	107	14.07
<b>Gingivitis</b>	73	9.60
<b>Others</b>	50	6.57
<b>Crowding</b>	46	6.05
<b>Denture</b>	43	5.65
<b>Periodontitis</b>	38	5.00

P. A.: Periapical; No.: Number; %: Percentage.

## DISCUSSION

The wide range of age recorded in present investigation shows that every person despite his age may need dental treatment. It was found that the admission of female patient more than male patients. This agreed with previous researches.<sup>(5,6)</sup> In this investigation the number of single patients admitted were more than married patients. Also it was found that the number of married female is much less. This may be attributed to limited time available and multiple pregnancies for married women that may prevent them to visit a dentist. The 20–29 years old was the predominant age group attending diagnosis clinic. This followed by 30–39 years age group. Our finding was compatible with other researches.<sup>(6,7,8,9)</sup> This predominance of middle age young over the older or younger age may be attributed to increasing loss of teeth, disability, medical problem, and mortality in old patient; and less dental problem in children. The most common chief complaint that makes patients seek dental treatment was pain (34.73 %). This finding was in consistent with other investiga-

tions.<sup>(7,9,10,11)</sup> Pain is defined as a sensation of suffering resulting from a noxious stimulus.<sup>(1,4)</sup> *Kerr et al*<sup>(1)</sup>, said that pain from the teeth is the most common cause of orofacial pain. The results of *Sternbach*<sup>(12)</sup>, showed that 27% of 1254 persons questioned were reported to have experienced dental pain during previous 12 months. The second reason for admitting to diagnosis clinic was dental check up (27.5 %). This relatively high percentage of patients came for check up reason indicates high dental educational level among Mosul City civilization. In a Turkish study<sup>[6]</sup>, it was found that 43.5 % of patients visit the dental faculty for check up. It is recommended for every person to visit the dentist every six months for dental check up<sup>(4)</sup>, because most dental problems can be prevented with regular dental care.<sup>(1,2)</sup> The percentage of esthetic and check up were higher in youngest age groups than in older one, while percentage of pain is relatively equal in all age group. It was unsurprisingly to found that oldest age group seek for teeth replacement more than younger age. The age of the patient

apparently influences the quality of describing the complaint. Although it is usually true that younger patients have more precise symptom perception than do older people who are diminished in their mental processes, the elderly patients may be much better able to tell the dentist about their troubles. As the older patients have experience in expressing themselves and past experience with symptoms.<sup>(1)</sup> Our results revealed that the percentage of esthetic complaint was significantly more in female than in male patients, while pain and check up were higher in male patients. Since women are known to take care of her beauty consistently than do men.

In present investigation, it was found that the frequency of check up in single group was more than pain, while in married patients group the percentage of pain was higher than check up. It was found that the most common diagnosis of the patients problem was dental caries (31.97 %) this followed by pulpitis (21.05 %) and periapical lesion (14.07 %). Dental caries, a bacterial disease of teeth characterized by destruction of enamel and dentine, is often the underlying cause of dental pain. When a carious lesion impinges on the dental pulp, pulpitis follows and, ultimately, necrosis of the pulp occurs. Untreated necrosis may lead to a localized abscess or a spreading infection into the surrounding soft tissue that results in cellulites.<sup>(13)</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

Every person despite his age may need dental treatment. The women seeking dental treatment more than do men. The single patients attending dentist more often than married patients did. Middle age was the predominant over the older or younger age.

Pain was the most common chief complaint that makes patients seek dental treatment this followed by check up, esthetic, and teeth replacement. Esthetic complaint was more common in females and youngest age patients. Dental caries was the most frequent diagnosis of the patients problem this followed by pulpitis and periapical lesion.

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