

A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY INVESTIGATING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF DENTAL SERVICES

Background and research objectives

Surveys show that although dental health in Britain is gradually improving there is still a sizeable proportion of the population whose dental health is poor. This study is required in order to better understand the consumer view of dental services. There is a particular interest in investigating perceived barriers to their use.

The **research objective** is to examine the range of features which inhibit people from seeking dental treatment.

Key research questions

- How people regard their dental health
- Attitudes to dental services
- Factors influencing the use of dental services
- Ways to help overcome inhibitions to using dental services

Research design

- Depth interviews
- Men and women aged 16-65, showing a range of dental attendance patterns:
 - o `Non-attenders' (last attended 5+ years ago)
 - o `Irregular attenders' (2-5 years ago)
 - o `Regular attenders' (within last and previous 12 months)

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF DENTAL SERVICES
TOPIC GUIDE**

Key objectives to:

- examine the range of features which inhibit people from seeking dental treatment
- explore how people regard their dental health
- explore attitudes to dental services
- identify barriers and facilitators to use of dental services
- identify ways to help overcome inhibitions to using dental services

Introduction

- Introduction to researcher and NatCen
- Introduction to the study, including aims and objectives
- Explain confidentiality, anonymity and recording
- Length of interview
- Any questions?

1. Background

- Household composition
- Day to day activity (i.e. working / not working / full-time education / looking after family etc.)

2. Dental Health Beliefs and Behaviours

Before talking about their attitudes towards dental services, it would be helpful to have some idea of how they regard their own dental health

- How would they describe their dental health
- What actions they take surrounding their dental health
 - *Probe:* cleaning / flossing / mouth wash / cosmetic / diet etc
- Influences – e.g. family, dentist, media, good/bad role models

3. Pattern of Dental Attendance

- Do they have a dentist
- How often they visit
- Usual reasons for going to the dentist
- Changes in pattern of visits in past, reasons

4. Attitudes to Visiting the Dentist

- What influences choice of a dentist, reasons
- Describe a recent visit to the dentist
- Likes and dislikes about visiting the dentist *probe:* -
 - Ease of getting appointment
 - Getting to the dentist
 - Receptionist
 - Waiting room
 - Treatment
 - Dentist's approach / manner
 - Dental nurses / hygienists
 - Cost

5. Factors Influencing Use of Dental Services

- What encourages / would encourage them to go to the dentist
- What do they feel are barriers to going to the dentist
- **Cost barriers**
 - Cost of check ups
 - Level of charges involved
 - If cheaper (or free) would they go more often
- How 'real' a barrier is cost?
 - Perceived Vs actual
 - Value for money
 - Relate to income / other competing demands on expenditure
- **Anxiety barriers**
 - Source of anxiety
 - Pain - in general or due to a specific treatment
 - Attitudes of dentist / other dental staff (e.g. friendliness, informative etc.)
 - Particular aspect of treatment (e.g. cleaning, drilling, extraction, fillings, injections, etc)
 - i. What is it in particular that they don't they like about this
 - Any other anxieties
- **Barriers to access**
- Other barriers

6. Removal of the Barriers

- What would encourage better dental attendance
- What action should the Dental Association take to promote better attendance

Thank participant for their time, reassure about confidentiality
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