

COVID-19 and its Effect on Iowa Dental Practices: A Survey

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Objective:

To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on dentists in the state of Iowa as they re-open practices following temporary closures in response to novel coronavirus.

Methods:

- An exploratory cross-sectional survey was designed to examine Iowa dentists' perceptions of COVID-19's impact on their practice of dentistry.
- The 44-item survey was distributed through the Iowa Dental Association COVID-19 newsletter to all current licensed dentists in the state (n≈2300).
- The exploratory study survey consisted of 44 questions related to infection control, PPE, basic office protocol, staffing, emergency treatment, and teledentistry.
- Statistical analysis consisted of descriptive, bivariate, and multivariable logistic regression analyses ($\alpha=0.1$).
- The study was approved by the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board.

Results:

- Descriptive results
 - 96 (4.2%) subjects completed the questionnaire and were included in study (52% solo private practice owners)
 - 27% considered closing or selling their practice
 - 33% anticipated seeing less Medicaid
 - 51% likely to utilize teledentistry
- Dentists considering selling or closing were more likely to.....
 - Solo owner with one office location 54% ($P<0.001$)
 - Anticipate less dental assistants in midst of pandemic (70%) ($p=.0.67$)
 - Anticipate less office hours than pre-COVID (89%) ($p=0.003$)
 - Anticipate seeing less or no change in number of Medicaid patients (52%)
 - Apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan grant (43%) $p=0.96$
- Dentists considering selling or closing were less likely to...
 - Use teledentistry (45%) ($p=0.063$)
 - Have a long-term office closure plan due to emergencies (15%) $p=(0.019)$

Conclusions:

The survey found it statistically significant that Iowa dentists who considered closing or selling their offices due to the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to be a sole owner in a private practice with one office location, anticipate less office hours than pre-COVID-19 hours, and anticipate seeing less or no change in the number of Medicaid patients. It was statistically significant that dentists were less likely to have a plan in place for long-term office closure due to emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.