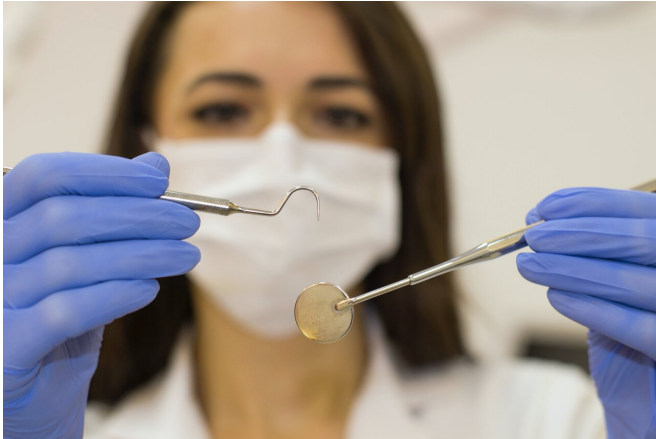


SARS-CoV-2 positivity in asymptomatic-screened dental patients

29 March 2021



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Asymptomatic carriage of SARS-CoV-2 is a potentially significant source of transmission, yet remains relatively poorly understood. The study "SARS-CoV-2 Positivity in Asymptomatic-screened Dental Patients" published in the *Journal of Dental Research (JDR)*, investigated SARS-CoV-2 infection in asymptomatic dental patients to inform community surveillance and improve understanding of risks in the dental setting.

Thirty-one [dental care](#) centers across Scotland invited asymptomatic screened patients over the age of five to participate. During the patient visit, trained dental teams took a combined oropharyngeal and nasal swab sample using standardized Viral Transport Medium containing test kits. Over a 13-week period, 4,032 patients were tested and of these 22 (0.5%; 95%CI 0.5%, 0.8%) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. The positivity rate increased over the period, commensurate with uptick in community prevalence identified across all national testing monitoring [data streams](#). The COVID-19 positivity rate in this patient group reflected the underlying prevalence in the community at the time.

This [surveillance program](#) had several advantages including using trained dental teams for the collection of high quality and complete data and samples. Moreover, there was no need for the clinical teams to use additional personal protective equipment as they were already wearing it to provide dental care and the patients could receive care despite periods of lockdown restriction.

"Enhanced community surveillance is a key pillar of the public health response to COVID-19. The results of this study demonstrate the value in, and feasibility of, developing and implementing SARS-CoV-2 surveillance testing within dental settings," said JDR Editor-in-Chief Nicholas Jakubovics, Newcastle University, England. "These data are also a salient reminder of the importance of appropriate ongoing infection prevention control and personal protective equipment vigilance."

More information: D.I. Conway et al, SARS-CoV-2 Positivity in Asymptomatic-Screened Dental Patients, *Journal of Dental Research* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/00220345211004849](https://doi.org/10.1177/00220345211004849)

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