Attitudes towards the use of fluorides for oral health among Islamic clerics in Kelantan Province, Malaysia

Objective: To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Imams (Islamic clerics) concerning fluoride toothpaste and fluoridated water to improve oral health in Kelantan. Basic research design: Cross sectional study of Imams in 65 registered mosques in Pasir Puteh district, Kelantan. Method and participants: Face-to-face interview, using structured questionnaire and some open ended questions. Results: Most of the 83 interviewees (82% participation rate) were unsure whether their toothpaste contained fluoride (64%), only 25% were sure. More than one-third (37%) were using fluoridated piped water. Most (87%) had little knowledge of fluorides and more than two-thirds (69%) had lacked positive attitudes towards its use. Television (54%) was the most common source of information about fluorides, followed by newspapers (9%). The main reasons given among the few who opposed fluoride use were i) fear of dangerous side effects (4%) and ii) uncertainty about the halal status of fluoride (2%). Attitudes were not associated with the use of fluoridated water supply (p=0.999), age (p=0.103), income (p=0.540) and location (p=0.999). Conclusion: Over two-thirds of Imams had little knowledge of and lacked positive attitudes towards fluoride use in toothpaste and piped water supplies.

Keywords: Attitude, fluorides, fluoridation, toothpastes, Muslims