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A study to assess the prevalence of unintentional paracetamol overdose by patients in pain attending primary dental care

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Paracetamol is a very commonly used medication for the treatment of dental pain in the UK. Our study aimed to assess patient awareness of maximum doses and investigate the prevalence of overdosing on paracetamol from recommended doses. We asked patients attending dental practices in South London for pain appointments. 100 survey responses were collected over 2 months from January to March of 2019. Results showed approximately 85% of patients used paracetamol when self-medicating for pain relief and approximately 1 in 4 patients were unaware of the correct doses. 37% of patients answered with an incorrect response and 2% of participants indicated they had overdosed on paracetamol in the past 24 hours. From the information we developed a patient information leaflet, a checklist for clinicians and posters to educate patients when trying to self-medicate for pain relief from dental pain in future. It is important for the general dental practitioner to help patients become aware of maximum dose to reduce risks of liver hepatotoxicity and chronic liver damage - a complication of paracetamol overdosing and poisoning – and educate them on how to manage a suspected overdosed patient presenting to primary care.

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