

## Cross Sectional Survey on Knowledge and Attitude towards Identifying and Reporting of Suspicious Activities among Patients Attending Private Dental College in Muradnagar, Ghaziabad

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### Abstract

**Background:** Suspicious activity is something out of the ordinary or out of place considering the location. Public intelligence on timely suspicious activity identification and reporting to stakeholders in structural elements of criminal justice system would facilitate methodologies in identifying suspects, prosecuting and convicting criminals while exonerating innocent people. **Aim & Objectives:** The present study aimed to assess knowledge and attitude towards identifying and reporting suspicious activities among patients attending private dental college. **Material and Methods:** A cross sectional survey was conducted in the Department of Public Health Dentistry, I.T.S Dental College on a convenient sample of 315 OPD patients aged 18 to 59 years during July to August 2012 with informed consent. Study subjects were interviewed through structured, pretested, validated questionnaire on 5 point likert scale in vernacular language by one calibrated investigator. Data was collected on socio demography, awareness on recognizing and reporting suspicious activity. SPSS 16 was employed with statistical level of significance at  $p < 0.05$  and 95% CI. **Results:** 82% subjects had slight knowledge about suspicious activities in which 3% have ever reported it. A total of 87% subjects had taken an initiative for creating awareness among individuals. 67.43% people think that Public service announcements (TV, radio) are effective source of learning suspicious activity. **Conclusion:** The results of this study add new insights into the motivators and barriers of why individuals do or do not report suspicious activity. This study also stimulates further research on exploring methods to identify and report suspicious activity and also shows that law enforcement and community partners can better develop and adapt strategies to improve community outreach and education efforts that enhance the public's awareness and reporting of suspicious activity.

**Keywords:** Suspicious activity; Law enforcement; Public awareness; Media; Education; Criminal justice system; Forensic odontology; Identification.

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### Introduction

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Society accepts that each and every person has an identity, and would in fact cease to function if this were not the case. This concept is enshrined in United Nations Universal

Declaration of human rights where it states "Everyone has the right to recognize everywhere as the person before the law". The need for this identity is also paramount after the death of an individual and represents a basic human rights.[1] Today we considered forensic odontology to be a specialized and reliable method of identification of an individual who cannot be identified visually by other means and also the suspicious activities (SA). The later defined as "observed behavior reasonably indicative of pre-operational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity. In January 2011, three cleanup workers notified law enforcement of a suspicious backpack they found on a bench along the route of a parade honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Spokane, Washington. The backpack contained a live radio-controlled pipe bomb. Due to timely reporting, law enforcement officers and bomb specialists were able to reroute the parade and neutralize the bomb before anyone was injured. This was just one of many examples that demonstrate the importance of the public's awareness and willingness to report suspicious activity. Members of public has long served as the "eyes and ears" of their communities. Community members support hometown security by being alert and reporting suspicious activity to law enforcement. In early 2010, International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) conducted research of contemporary and historical practices intended to improve the public reporting of suspicious activity. This research effort complements other national efforts like the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's "If You See Something, Say Something" public awareness campaign. This campaign was originally used by New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which has licensed the use of the slogan to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for anti-terrorism and anti-crime efforts.[2,3] Delhi Police has also launched "eye and ear Scheme" with special emphasis to sensitize all the stake

holders such as Rehriwala, Patriwalas, guards, vendors, parking attendants, drivers, etc.[4] SAR is important to ensure that your agency's personnel have received the frontline officer training on identifying and reporting suspicious activities that are potentially indicative of terrorist or other criminal activity. This training is coordinated by the NSI, United States, DHS, FBI, the Indian Association Forensic Odontology and CBI includes tribal governments in information sharing initiatives.[5] In India, a total of 1,06,343 deaths cases were reported during 2010 showing an increase of 7.9% over 2009. Tamil Nadu and U.P. has reported together accounted for 27.4% of total deaths reported due to negligence of people in the country.[6] Dental identification plays a key role in identification of suspicious person by comparison the ante mortem records and postmortem records. Ante mortem loss or fracture of tooth in assault cases is a criminal act U/S 320 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) clause.[7] If such cases are to be examined medico-legally, then determination of nature and age of injury (loss of tooth) is very important to co-relate the history with the occurrence of crime from medical and dental facts. Knowledge among dentists also ensures that public in general and other stakeholder-particularly police, forensic medical experts and other judiciary recognize the specialty's application and importance.[8] Residents know their communities best and are often the first to notice when something out of the ordinary occurs. With the onset of decreased resources and increased responsibilities, law enforcement is more reliant than ever on community members to provide accurate, reliable, and timely information regarding suspicious activities that may be indicators of terrorism.[1] Dearth of reported studies on this perspective in India directed to conduct present survey on assessing knowledge and attitude towards identifying and reporting of suspicious activities among patients attending private dental college, Muradnagar, Ghaziabad.

## Material and Methods

A Cross sectional questionnaire based survey was conducted on 315 patients attending I.T.S Dental College, Muradnagar, Ghaziabad.

Pilot study was carried out on 60 (10%) subjects in the month of July 2012 before starting the main study to check feasibility of study, pretesting and validation of questionnaire. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants who were willing to participate in the study. Prior scheduling was done before conducting the survey and the data was collected during the month of August 2012.

Study participants were recruited by Convenient sampling. Patients who visited Department of Public Health Dentistry for dental check up and treatment during the survey period above 18 years of age and willing to participate in the study were included. Those patients, who were mentally or physically handicapped, were excluded from the study.

A total of 315 patients aged 18-59 years consisting 132 males and 183 females were included in the study who fulfilled inclusion criteria. Before interview, patients were instructed to choose only one answer for each question asked. One calibrated interviewer collected the data by a proforma which was designed based on previous studies and modified after pilot study having structured, pretested, validated questionnaire[5] in vernacular language (English and Hindi). Questionnaire with 15 items comprised of variables on knowledge and attitude for identifying and reporting suspicious activity, patient identification, socio-demographic details was employed. Importance of reporting SA, knowledge about help line numbers, what make a person suspicious, methods of reporting SA, rewarding of reporting SA, location to be aware of SA, any behavior that appears to be a preparation for SA, awareness of anyone attempting to gain information in person, by phone, mail, Which is the effective

source of information for learning the SA reporting. Fear of reporting SA. Responses of all questions were assessed on 5 point *Likert scale*.

The intra-examiner reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa statistics and the mean intra-examiner Kappa-value was 0.85 (SD 0.12, median 0.87).

### *Statistical analysis*

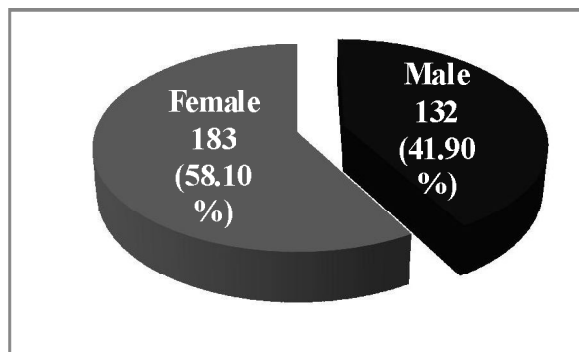
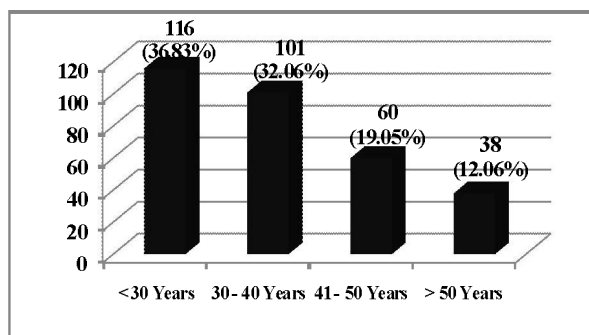
The data obtained was compiled systematically, transformed from a pre-coded proforma to a computer and a master table was prepared. Descriptive statistical analysis has been carried out in the present study. Results on continuous measurements are presented on Mean  $\pm$ SD (Min-Max) and results on categorical measurements are presented in Numbers (%) keeping P-value < 0.05 at 95% confidence level. The statistical software namely SPSS 16.0 was used to analysis of the data and Microsoft excel have been used to generate graphs, tables, etc.

## Results

In order to better tailor messaging and programs on suspicious activity reporting, better understanding was needed on how the general population defined suspicious activity. A total of 315 OPD patients participated in the study with a mean age of 32.40 years (SD = 11.20 years).male patients were 41.90% (132) and 58.10% (183) were females (Figure 1).

Among 315 participants majority 36.83% (116) were under 30 years of age followed by 32.06% (101) in the age group 30- 40 years, 19.05% (60) in the age group 41- 50 years and 12.06% (38) were over 50 years. (Figure 2)

Education level varied among the patients with majority having high level (102, 32.38%) and medium level (139, 44.13%) of education. On the other hand few patients were having low level education (64, 20.32%) and 10 (3.17%) were illiterate. (Table 1)

**Figure 1: Gender Wise Distribution of Study Population****Figure 2: Age Wise Distribution of Study Population**

Among 315 participants interviewed 58.41% (184) were married and 41.59% (131) were not married.

A total of 82.54% individuals have slight knowledge about suspicious activities in which 4.45% were confident enough to identify and 7.62% has knowledge that Bite

marks and lip prints will eventually lead to identify the suspect or victim (Table 2). In this study, participants were presented with a list of circumstances that could prevent them from reporting suspicious activities. Nearly 32.38% said that a fear or mistrust of law enforcement could deter them from reporting of suspicious activity. (Figure 3). Most of the participants (92.06%) indicated that they would not hesitate to report suspicious activity in airports or mass transit systems (Figure 4).

Law enforcement subject matter experts had mixed feelings on the best method to report suspicious activity. A total of 67.62% participants were aware of help line numbers in reporting suspicious activity (Table 3).

A total of 96.51% have never ever reported suspicious activities (Table 4).

Participants believed that public service announcements (67.62%) were the most effective way to learn about how to report the suspicious activity (Figure 5). Some participants noted the importance of including local elected officials or law enforcement leaders to gain local buy in. Nearly 27.62% rated presentations at school, work, or community meetings were "very effective." 42.22% of individuals of all age groups were somewhat more likely to mention using posters in mass transit stations were nearly half effective. (Figure 5) and 7.30% participants were not at all likely to lookout for SA in above

**Table 1: Education Wise Distribution of Study Population**

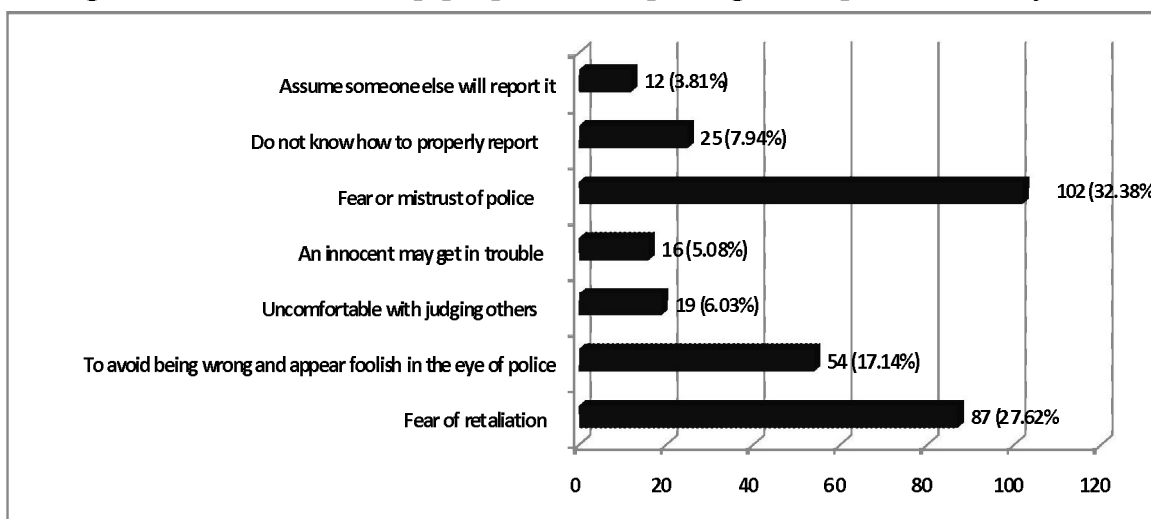
High level (Professional , Honours, Graduate or Post Graduate)	102 (32.38%)
Medium level (Intermediate or High School certificate)	139 (44.13%)
Low level (Middle or Primary School Certificate)	64 (20.32%)
Illiterate	10 (3.17%)

**Table 2: Knowledge and confidence to identify and in-service training in identifying any kind of suspicious activity**

	No	Slight	Fair	Good	Very Much
Knowledge about suspicious activity	23 (7.30%)	260 (82.54%)	26 (8.25%)	06 (1.91%)	00 (0.00%)
Confidence to identify suspicious activities.	22 (6.98%)	196 (62.22%)	83 (26.35%)	14 (4.45%)	00 (0.00%)
In- service training to identify any kind of suspicious activity.	274 (87%)	35 (11%)	00 (0.00%)	00 (0.00%)	00 (0.00%)
Fear of any negative consequences of the reporting suspicious activity?	24 (7.62%)	55 (17.46%)	142 (45.08%)	NA	94 (29.84%)

NA - Not Applicable

**Figure 3: Reasons that stop people from reporting of suspicious activity**



locations. (Table 5)

Participants would like to prefer cell phone application to submit a tip were 64.71%; 7.84% would use a cell phone to report *via* text message; and 3.92% would submit information through a government approved website, (Table 6).

Individuals who had taken an initiative for creating awareness among individuals regarding suspicious activity were 39, out of which 28 participants used counseling considered as an effective source, (Table 7).

## Discussion

Identification of the suspicious person and their intended activities causing potential damage is not only a legal necessity, but also a human right and dignity that society has a duty to act. Knowledge on timely identification and reporting of these suspicious activities by the public is required for stakeholders' intervention to make them aware of their potential role.

A total of 62.22% study participants were slight confident in identifying suspicious activities found to be lower than Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) report.

The Participants identified several barriers that may prevent their suspicious activity

reporting. Some participants not keen to take initiative for reporting suspicious activity were 87.48%, 32.38% of them had fear and mistrust of police followed by 27.62% having fear of retaliation which was higher than FEMA study that showed 23% of individuals stopping themselves in reporting SA as they wanted to avoid being wrong or appearing "foolish" in the eyes of local law enforcement.

In FEMA report 69% participants were aware of suspicious activities locations at Air port, bus station and subway, which was not in accordance to our study (92.02%). People are likelihood of using call on 911 (74%) for reporting suspicious activity which supported our study. The importance of educating public about SAR was emphasized throughout the research. 56% of study participants believed that public announcements (TV, Radio) are most effectively delivering the message about SAR similar to our study findings.[1]

Participants who would like to prefer cell phone application to submit a tip were 64.71% ; 7.84% would use a cell phone to report *via* text message; and 3.92% would submit information through a government approved website whereas, FEMA study showed 74%.

Financial Crimes Enforcement Network also conducted research on assessment of SARs filed by insurance companies in the one-year period from May 2, 2007, through April 30, 2008, finds that most filers are primarily

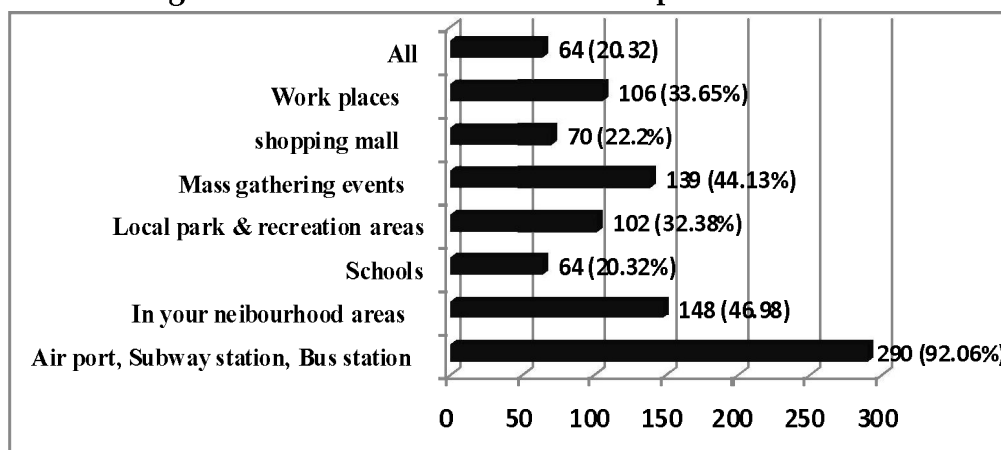
**Table 3: Knowledge and awareness of suspicious activities among study population**

	YES	NO
Do you know the importance of reporting suspicious activity?	166 (52.69%)	149 (47.30%)
Bite marks and lip prints will eventually lead to identify the suspect or victim?	24 (7.62%)	291 (92.38%)
Are you aware of anyone recording or monitoring activities, tracking something, taking notes, using cameras, binoculars, etc., near your place?	33 (10.48%)	282 (89.52%)
Observed abandoned vehicles, stockpiling of suspicious materials, or persons being deployed near your place?	21 (6.67%)	294 (93.33%)
Aware of anyone who does not appear to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business establishment, or near your work place?	44 (13.97%)	271 (86.03%)
Aware of anyone attempting to gain information in person, by phone, mail, e-mail, etc.,	32 (10.16%)	283 (89.84%)
Aware of anyone attempting to improperly acquire explosives, weapons, ammunitions, dangerous chemicals, badges, flight manuals, access cards or to legally obtain items under suspicious circumstances that can be used in a terrorist attack?	00 (0.00%)	315 (100.00%)
Are you aware of help line numbers for reporting suspicious activity?	102 (32.38%)	213 (67.62%)

**Table 4: Observation and reporting of suspicious activities**

	YES	NO
Observed any behavior that appears to be a preparation for suspicious/crime activity?	26 (8.25%)	289 (91.75%)
Have you ever reported the suspicious activity?	11 (3.49%)*	304 (96.51%)
Have you being rewarded for reporting suspicious activities? <sup>†</sup>	00 (0.00%)	11 (3.49%)
Have you ever taken an initiative for creating awareness regarding suspicious activity among individuals	39 (12.38%)	276 (87.62%)

\*Majority reported at police station

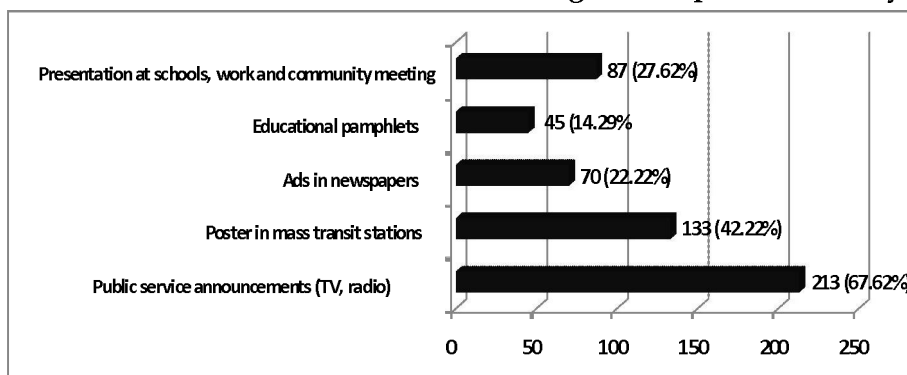
<sup>†</sup>study population who ever reported the suspicious activity**Figure 4: Location to be aware of suspicious activities**

reporting on various suspicious payment methods. Additionally, while SAR filings almost doubled in the second year of mandatory reporting, from 641 to 1,276, virtually half of the filings – 628 reports came from the subsidiaries of two parent

**Table 5: How likely lookout for suspicious activity in above following locations?**

Not at all likely	23 (7.30%)
Not very likely	73 (23.17%)
Somewhat likely	166 (52.70%)
Very likely	53 (16.83%)

**Figure 5: Effective source of information for learning the suspicious activity reporting**



**Table 6: Which method would you prefer for reporting suspicious activities?\***

Call	66 (64.71%)
Message	08 (7.84%)
Self Reporting	24 (23.53%)
Report on Website	04 (3.92%)

\*Out of study population aware of helpline numbers

**Table 7: Through which source you had taken an initiative for creating awareness among individuals regarding suspicious activity\***

Planned interview	2 (5.13%)
Counseling	28 (71.79%)
Health personnel	9 (23.08%)

\*Out of 39 who had taken an initiative for creating awareness regarding suspicious activity among individual

companies.[5] Our findings should be interpreted with caution. Applicability, utility and generalizability of the study to a wider population are possible and can also include more geographically diverse samples.

Public health dentists can bring a wide range of skill sets based on personal experience, training and enthusiasm. They are well trained in many areas that may be a part of mass casualty events like treating oral, facial and cranial injuries, obtaining medical histories, providing and assisting in anesthesia, suturing and performing appropriate surgeries, assisting in stabilization and shock management.[9] Members of dental public health and other stakeholders must be encouraged to involve dentists as team members of the national disaster plan development. Surveillance reporting and getting information about suspicious activity by Public health dentists, as well as the general

public, using all appropriate media, is also essential. They also provide patient education and work with other team members to provide quality care.[8]

The limitations of this study require that investigators should be critically aware of the pitfalls of these types of study design and ensure that they are appropriately recognized and addressed. There is no enough study done in the past and there would also be the chances of misrepresentation of data because of convenient sampling.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this research add new insights into the motivators and barriers of why individuals do or do not report suspicious activity, as well as the technology and resources that can be used to help encourage suspicious activity reporting. With this information, law enforcement and community partners can better develop and adapt strategies through effective motivation and education to improve community outreach and education efforts that enhance the public's awareness and reporting of suspicious activity. This study stimulates further research on identifying and reporting suspicious activities.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to assist national and local efforts to

improve the public's awareness and reporting of suspicious activity reporting; Local law enforcement and community organizations should advertise and promote public involvement in identifying and reporting suspicious activities through outreach efforts and campaigns; Public education efforts should provide community members with a better understanding of what suspicious activity entails; Public messaging about the importance of suspicious activity should come from local leaders; Communities should leverage new technologies to promote anonymous and easily accessible methods of reporting. Call 911 from a landline phone if a person sees any kind of suspicious activity or suspicious person.

#### *Conflict of interest*

There was no conflict of interest in our study.

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