Both prospective dental implant patients and the general public agree in a new study: oral and maxillofacial surgeons are the most qualified to perform the procedure to replace missing teeth.

The study, published in the July issue of the Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, also finds the public needs more education about dental implants, and dental providers should emphasize this information to potentially improve patients’ experiences.

For the study, two groups of adult patients were asked about dental implants and where they obtained information about them. The general population group had 50 randomly selected patients at the emergency clinic at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. These patients had no plans to have dental implants placed. The other group had 76 patients who had scheduled a dental implant consultation at the school’s Dental Implant Clinic.

Most participants from both groups agreed: 1) oral and maxillofacial surgeons are the best doctors to place implants, 2) implants need the same dental hygiene as a normal tooth, and 3) the top factor for not getting an implant is cost.

Nearly 25 percent of the general population group had never heard of dental implants. Most participants in this group received their implant information from less dependable sources, according to the study. These participants were more likely to obtain information from their friends or family members, while the implant consultation patients were more likely to say their dentist was their top source for information.

The study also finds that patients who understand the dental implant procedure and their role in post-surgical care and oral hygiene can have an overall successful experience. Doctors should have an understanding of a patient’s knowledge about implants, the accuracy of that information and why patients may decline getting them, researchers wrote.

“Although this study showed that patients presenting for dental implants generally are better informed than the general public, the fact that even in this group some were less knowledgeable than others indicates that there is still a need for public education,” the authors wrote.

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The full article can be accessed at www.JOMS.org/article/S0278-2391(17)30342-7/fulltext.

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