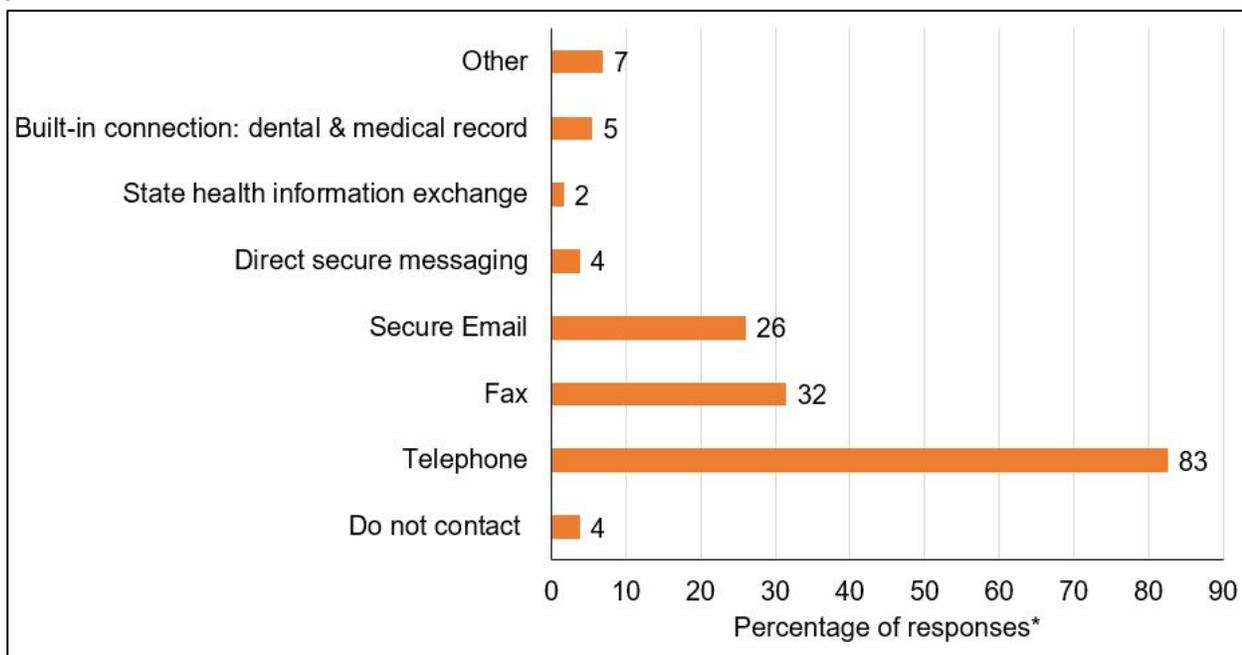


Results of Quick Poll on Health Information Exchange

A complete and up-to-date medical and medication history of patients is essential to avoid potential harm and enhance treatment outcomes during dental care. As a result, dental providers obtain a comprehensive medical history during patient care. Since the implementation of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) in 2009, efforts have been made to enhance patient care and patient experience through improved health information exchange among health care providers. The federal government and states have implemented many approaches over the past decade with varying degrees of success. However, over the last 2-3 years, regional health information exchanges (HIE) have thrived at the rate of 25% or more each year. Today, approximately 200 million documents are exchanged every month. This Quick Poll was designed to gain preliminary insights into dental providers' communication with their medical colleagues and participation in the HIE. The Quick Poll received 428 responses, and 75 percent of respondents reported as members of the network.

Figure 1: Different approaches used by dental clinicians to obtain information from other health care providers and facilities



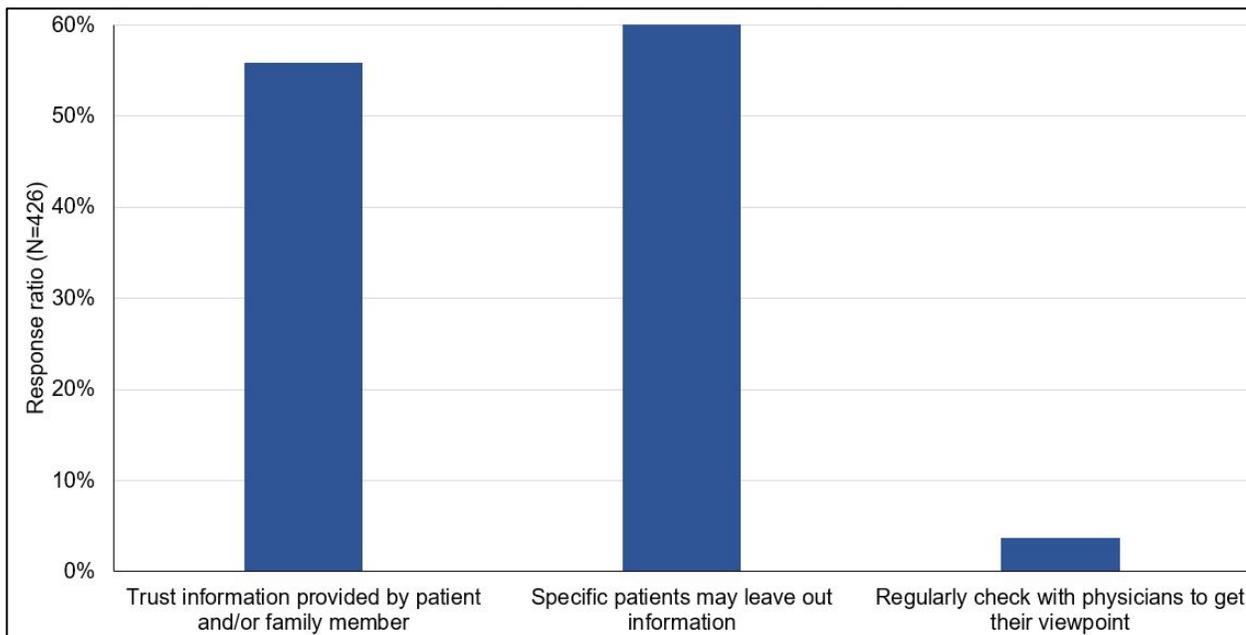
*Total percentage of responses is greater than 100 since participants (N=419) could check multiple answers.

An overwhelming majority (94%) of dental providers (N=428) obtained additional medical information of their patients from physicians, hospitals, or other health care providers before providing care. One-third of the participants requested additional medical and medication histories of all their patients, and 32% sought additional information only for patients with chronic conditions. One-third of the participants asked this information infrequently or rarely. Dental clinicians obtained additional information mostly through telephone calls to the physician and other health care facilities (83%) or faxing a request (32%) (Figure 1). Information

was obtained in some cases via a secure messaging exchange, but only a few clinicians participated in a state or regional HIE. Few participants described sending medical consults to physicians through patients.

Dental providers perceived patient-reported medical histories to be accurate, fifty-six percent of the time. At the same time, they felt some patients did not share or omitted some information about their general health (Figure 2). Patients think dental providers are not required to be aware of all their medical conditions. Therefore, four percent of participants checked regularly with their patients' physicians to confirm their general health. Participants acknowledged the difficulty in obtaining information from physicians' offices and may contact the pharmacy to obtain up-to-date medication history.

Figure- 2: Dental clinicians' confidence in patient-reported medical and medication histories (N=426). *Total percentage is higher than 100% because participants checked multiple responses



While 7 percent of participants referred their patients to physicians several times a week, 33% referred at least once a month, and 46% referred to physicians less than a month (Table 1). They acknowledged the need to have a tool that enables dental providers through a few clicks to access their patients' medical information. Such an approach would allow them to obtain information in a timely and seamless manner without overwhelming their medical colleagues. Our medical colleagues are rapidly moving beyond simple exchange toward true interoperability (being able to populate each other's medical records). Dentistry appears to be in the early stage of utilizing HIE beyond our original telephone and fax methodologies.

Table 1: Frequency of referring patients to physicians by dental providers

Frequency of referral	Number of responses (%)
Several times a week	29 (7)
At least once a month	140 (33)
Less than a month	195 (46)
Never	60 (14)
No responses	4 (1)