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Received: 16 March 2018 | Accepted: 7 November 2018 DOI: 10.1111/jebm.l2331

ARTICLE

Prevalence of pulp stones: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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| 1Student Research Committee, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Iran | Abstract |
| 2 Department of Community Medicine, Zabol University of Medical Sciences, Zabol, Iran | **Objective:** During the last years, different prevalences of dental pulps had been reported from different parts of the world. Combining these original estimates will provide useful information |
| 3Health Sciences Research Centre, Addiction Institute, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Iran | for policymaking in the field of health, treatment and research. This study aims to estimate the global prevalence of pulp stones. |
| Correspondence  Mahmood Moosazadeh, Health Science Research Center, Addiction I nstitute, Mazan- daran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Iran Email: mmoosazadehl351@gmail.com. | **Methods:** Electronic databanks such as PubMed, Scopus, Science direct, Cochrane, and also Google scholar motor engine were searched by 2 researchers using related keywords. The het­erogeneity between the results was assessed using Cochrane and *I2* indices. The initial estimates were represented by forest plot and were combined according to random effects models. Fac­tors responsible for heterogeneity were investigated using meta-regression models, and studies responsible for heterogeneity were assessed following sensitivity analysis.  **Results:** Prevalence of pulp stones had been reported in 16 studies including 14 093 subjects. The pooled prevalence (95% confidence interval) of pulp stones among the total population, men and women were estimated as of 36.53% (27.17-45.88), 32.58% (24-41.15), and 39.23% (28.73­49.73), respectively. In addition, of 193 687 teeth investigated during the primary studies, 9.57% (95% confidence interval: 7.05-12.08) were affected by pulp stones.  **Conclusion:** Our meta-analysis shows a considerable prevalence of pulp stones, especially among women.  KEYWORDS  dental, meta-analysis, prevalence, pulp stone |

1. I INTRODUCTION

Pulp stone is a calcified mass establishing within healthy or diseased teeth.1 It may appear in the coronal or root portion of the pulp freely, adherent or embedded into the dentin. The stones have different sizes, and those under 200 microns are not visible by routine radiographical procedures.2

Several factors have been reported for pulp stones including age, mis-perfusion of the pulp, genetic background and prolonged stimula­tors such as dental decay or deep dental filling. Pulp necrosis was often revealed following trauma but sometimes is observed after orthodon­tic therapy. In general, pulp stone was considered as a part of ageing particularly in the elderly. However, it can develop during systemic or genetic diseases.3

Most researchers believe that pulp stones were developed during ageing. In addition, no enough evidence has existed regarding the asso­ciation between gender and pulp stone. However, some studies show higher rates of these stones among women. Moreover, according to the most evidence, the rate is the same in both maxillary and mandibular bones.3

Prevalence of pulp stone has been reported between 8% and 90%. Such variations might be according to the design of the studies as well as the radiological techniques.4 The small stones are painless. How­ever, larger ones can be painful.5

Based on our initial search, several studies have been carried out regarding the prevalence of pulp stones reporting various estimates just from the limited areas. No comprehensive study was found to estimate the global prevalence of this problem. Such total estimates are required for establishing appropriate treatment planning. Meta­analysis is a reasonable technique combining the results of primary studies. This study aims to estimate the total prevalence of pulp stones and its related factors in the world.

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J *Evid Based Med.* 2018; 1-7.

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of pulp stones were study in the hetero­Publication bias was

1. I MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted according to a predesigned protocol based on the PRISMA checklist The protocol was registered in the PROS­PERO (CRD42017071651)(6).

1. I SEARCH STRATEGY

Electronic databanks such as PubMed, Scopus, Science direct, Cochrane, and also Google scholar motor engine were searched by 2 researchers up to July 10,2017 using the following keywords: “Dental Pulp Stone,” “Pulp Stones, Dental," “Pulp Stones," “Stone, Pulp," “Pulp Calcification, Dental," “Prevalence," "Epidemiology," "Frequency." They also reviewed the references to find any additional relevant study.

1. I INCLUSION CRITERIA

Papers written in English, descriptive studies reporting the prevalence of pulp stone among men, women or total populations without any geo­graphical limitation were included in our review.

1. I SELECTION OF THE STUDIES

All identified studies during the electronic search were reviewed. The duplicated evidence were omitted, and irrelevant papers were excluded after investigating the titles, abstracts, and full texts respectively.

1. I QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The relevant studies remained after the screening were quality assessed using the STROBE checklist. This standard tool assessed all aspects of the methodology of the primary studies such as sampling, type and study design, data collection, the definition of the variables, diagnostic criteria and statistical methodology. Minimum and maxi­mum quality scores for each paper based on this checklist were 0 and 44, respectively, which were classified into low quality (less than 15.5), moderate quality (15.5-29.5) and high quality.7-30'44

1. I DATA EXTRACTION

Study title, the name of first author, date and place of the study, type of the study, type of imaging applied for diagnosis, total sample size as well as the sample size of each gender, total prevalence of pulp stone as well as the prevalence for each gender, number of teeth studied and prevalence of stones based on teeth count were extracted from each study.

1. I STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using Stata version 14. The heterogeneity of the results of the primary studies was assessed based on Cochrane and /2 indices considering *P <* 0.1. The degree of heterogeneity was clas­sified based on Higgins criteria.8 According to the significant hetero­geneity, random effect model was applied for meta-analysis assuming that the primary studies are random samples of a larger population.9 Meta-regression models were designed to investigate the role of het­erogeneity factors. Point and pooled prevalences

shown by forest plots. The role of each primary geneity was assessed during sensitivity analysis. checked using the Egger's test.

1. I RESULTS

During a comprehensive search, 952 studies were identified. After a sequential screening (duplicate exclusion, review of titles, abstracts and full texts), 5 case-control studies,10-14 1 review literature15 and 8 studies due to not reporting prevalence16-23 were excluded. The remaining 16 papers1-3’24-36 were quality assessed all of which had high to moderate quality scores and were considered eligible for meta­analysis (Figure 1 and Table 1).

All of the finally selected articles were cross-sectional, one of which was conducted in Australia, 2 were conducted in India, 4 studies were carried out in Iran, 1 in Iraq, 1 in Malaysia, 1 in Nigeria, 1 in Saudi Ara­bia and 5 studies were conducted in Turkey. All of these studies were published during 2002-2015.

These primary studies reported the prevalence of pulp stones among 14 093 subjects varied from 12% in Gulsahi study conducted among 519 Indian people to 63.6% reported by Colak among 814 patients in Turkey. Because the significant heterogeneity between the primary results *(I2:* 99.3%, Q: 2093.16, *P <* 0.001), the random effect model was applied to estimate the combined prevalence. The total prevalence of pulp stone was estimated as of 36.53% (95% confidence interval: 27.17-45.88) (Figure 2A). Meta-regression models revealed that the radiography was not a source of heterogeneity (/? = -6.54, *P =* 0.138). Sensitivity analysis showed that Turkal study had the most influence on the heterogeneity. So that omitting this study reduced the degree of the heterogeneity from 99.3% to 98.6% and also the prevalence of pulp stone was changed to 38.12% (29.36-46.90). Also, the Egger's test showed no evidence of publication bias (/? = 13.54, P = 0.124).

Prevalence of pulp stones among men was reported by 16 studies including 6114 subjects varied between 10% in the study conducted by Turkal among 3052 men in Turkey and 58.5% in a Colak study car­ried out among 352 Turkish individuals. Using random effect model *(I2:* 98%, Q: 741.87, P < 0.001), the total prevalence (95% confidence inter­val) of pulp stones among men was estimated as of 32.58% (24-41.15) (Figure 2B).

Prevalence of pulp stone among 7979 women was estimated in 16 studies. Minimum and maximum prevalences were reported from 7.02% in Gulsahi study carried out among 313 Indian women to 69.6%

Records identified through  
database searching  
(n = 952 )

Additional records identified  
through other sources  
(n = 18)

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Studies included in  
quantitative synthesis  
(meta-analysis)  
(n =16)

**FIG U R E 1** Flowchart of study selection

conducted by Sisman among 303 Turkish women. Using random effect model *(I2:* 99.1%, Q: 1616.35, *P <* 0.001), the total prevalence (95% confidence interval) of pulp stone among women was estimated as of 39.23% (28.73-49.73) (Figure 2C).

Prevalence of pulp stone based on the number of investigated teeth was reported in 15 primary studies among 193 687 teeth. These esti­mates varied from 2.1% in Turkal study conducted among 96 240 teeth to 27.8% reported by Colak among 12 928 teeth in Turkey. Using ran­dom effect model because of significant heterogeneity *(I2:* 99.8%, Q: 7150.45, *P <* 0.001), pulp stone was observed in 9.57% (95% confi­dence interval) of the samples (Figure 2D).

1. I DISCUSSION

Our study estimated the global prevalence of pulp stones based on genders. Combining the results of studies carried out among 14 093 subjects, the total prevalence of pulp stone was estimated as of 36.5%. Minimum and maximum rates were observed in India (12%) and Turkey (63.6%), respectively. Different prevalences have been reported in other countries as well as in different regions in each country. The type of diagnostic methods and study samples can be responsible for these variations. For example, such studies did not recruit eroded or repaired teeth samples.

Our study also estimated the prevalence of pulp stones among men and women. Just limited information was extracted from the primary studies in term of other factors such as age, background diseases, type of tooth and jaw. Therefore, subgroup analysis was not performed based on such variables. However, these issues were briefly mentioned in the results.

More than half of the primary studies reported higher prevalences of pulp stones among women.2’22’27-29’32 That was the case for the total estimate. Sener reported that higher frequency of bruxism among women is responsible for the higher rate of pulp stones.27

Studies conducted by Hekmatian,34 Kazemizadeh,35 Javadzadeh,36 and Al-Nathan25 reported significantly higher rates of pulp stones among subjects aged over 50. In general, senile changes in the den­tal structure is inevitable which occurs following second dentin depo­sition, hypoperfusion of the pulp, atherosclerotic changes, and pulp destruction during ageing.1

**TABLE 1** Characteristics of the primary studies entered into the meta-analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Study number | First author | Publication year | County | Radiographic choice |
| 1 | Sreelakshmi | 2014 | India | OPG |
| 2 | Gulsahi | 2009 | Turkey | Periapical radiograph |
| 3 | Al-Nazhan | 2011 | Saudi Arabia | Bitewing radiographs |
| 4 | Ranjitkar | 2002 | Australian | Bitewing radiographs |
| 5 | Colak | 2012 | Turkey | Bitewing radiographs |
| 6 | Şener | 2009 | Turkey | Periapical+bitewing radiographs |
| 7 | Turkal | 2013 | Turkey | Periapical radiograph |
| 8 | Bains | 2014 | India | Bitewing radiographs |
| 9 | Al-Ghurabi | 2012 | Iraq | OPG |
| 10 | Udoye | 2011 | Nigeria | Periapical radiograph |
| 11 | Kannan | 2015 | Malaysia | Periapical radiograph |
| 12 | Sisman | 2012 | turkey | Bitewing radiographs |
| 13 | Ravanshad | 2015 | Iran | Periapical+bitewing radiographs |
| 14 | Hekmatian | 2014 | Iran | Periapical radiograph |
| 15 | Kazemizadeh | 2008 | Iran | Periapical+bitewing radiographs |
| 16 | Javadzadeh | 2014 | Iran | Bitewing radiographs |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total | | Male | | Female | | Teeth | |
| ***n*** | Prevalence | ***n*** | Prevalence | ***n*** | Prevalence | ***N*** | Prevalence |
| *150* | 53 | 75 | 52 | 75 | 54.7 | 4399 | 6 |
| 519 | 12 | 206 | 18.4 | 313 | 7.02 | 13 474 | 5 |
| 600 | 46.8 | 319 | 36.7 | 281 | 58.4 | 8456 | 10.2 |
| 217 | 46 | 123 | 44.7 | 94 | 47.9 | 3296 | 10.1 |
| 814 | 63.6 | 352 | 58.5 | 462 | 67.5 | 12 928 | 27.8 |
| 536 | 38 | 270 | 30.7 | 266 | 45.5 | 15 326 | 4.8 |
| 6912 | 12.7 | 3052 | 10 | 3860 | 14.2 | 96 240 | 2.1 |
| 500 | 41.8 | 257 | 38.1 | 243 | 45.7 | 2180 | 12.3 |
| 390 | 34.8 | 169 | 36 | 221 | 33.9 | 10 510 | 2.6 |
| 300 | 21 | 130 | 21.5 | 170 | 20.6 | 1154 | 9.9 |
| 361 | 44.9 | 156 | 38.5 | 205 | 49.8 | 1779 | 15.7 |
| 469 | 57.6 | 167 | 30.3 | 302 | 69.6 | 6926 | 15 |
| 652 | 46.9 | 202 | 37.6 | 450 | 51 | 8244 | 11.25 |
| 500 | 25.6 | 198 | 27.2 | 302 | 24.5 |  |  |
| 800 | 20 | 318 | 21.7 | 482 | 18.9 | 2681 | 7.9 |
| 373 | 20.9 | 120 | 21.7 | 253 | 20.5 | 6094 | 3.2 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Study /A\**  ID (A)' | ES(95%CI) | Weight |
| OPG |  |  |
| Sreelakshmi (2014) | 53.00 (45.01,60 99) | 6.06 |
| Al-Ghurabi (2012) -4- | 34 80 (30.07,39 53) | 624 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 93.2%, p = 0 000) | 43.60 (25.78, 61 43) | 12.30 |
| bitewng radiographs 1 |  |  |
| Javad zadeh (2014) | 20.90 (16.77,25.03) | 626 |
| Al-N azhan (2011) 1 | 46.80(42.81,50 79) | 627 |
| Colak (2012) | 6 3 60 (60 29, 66 91) | 629 |
| Ranjlkar (2002) 1 —♦ | 46.00 (39.37,52 63) | 6.14 |
| Sisman (2012) | 57.60(53.13,62.07) | 625 |
| Bains (2014) l-«- | 41.80 (37.48, 46 12) | 626 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 98.2%, p = 0.000) | 46.13(33.16,59.10) | 37.47 |
| periapical radiograph ! |  |  |
| Udoye(2011) | 21.00 (16.39,25.61) | 624 |
| Gulsahi (2009) | 12.00(9.20, 14.80) | 630 |
| Turkal (2013) • | 1Z70 (11.92,13.48) | 6.34 |
| Hekmatian (2014) 1 | 25.60(21.77,29 43) | 627 |
| Kan nan(2015) | 4 4 90(39 77,50 03) | 622 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 98.0%, p = 0.000) o r\* | 23.00 (14.15, 31.86) | 31.38 |
| periapical+bitewing radiographs |  |  |
| Ravanshad(2015) | 46 90 (43 07,50 73) | 6 27 |
| Kazemizadeh (2008) 1 | 20.00 (17.23,22 77) | 631 |
| Sen er (2009) 4- | 38 00(33 89, 42 11) | 6 26 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 98.5%, p = 0 000) | 34.92 (17 98, 51 87) | 18 84 |
| Overall (l-squared ■ 99.3%, p ■ 0 000) | 36.53(27.17, 45 88) | 10000 |
| -NOT-E-WeiG-hts-ara-fr-om random effects analysis | 1 |  |
| -66.9 | 66.9 |  |
| Study |  | % |
| "> (C) | ES(95%CI) | Weight |
| periapical radiograph **1** |  |  |
| Turkal (2013) \* ■ | 14.20 (13.10,15 30) | 6.38 |
| Gulsahi (2009) | 7 02(4 19,9 85) | 635 |
| Udoye (2011) | 20 60 (14.52,26 68) | 625 |
| Hekmatian (2014) | 24 50(19 65,29 35) | 630 |
| Kannan(2015) 1 | 49.80 (42.96, 56 64) | 621 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 97 3%, p= 0.000) o | 22.73 (13 60, 31 86) | 31 49 |
| bite wig radiographs 1 1 |  |  |
| Javad zadeh (2014) | 20.50 (15.53,25 47) | 6.29 |
| Sisman (2012) | 69.60(64.41,74.79) | 6.28 |
| Al-N azhan (2011) | 58.40 (52.64, 64 16) | 6.26 |
| Bains (2014) | 45.70 (39 .44, 51.96) | 6.24 |
| Ranjitkar (2002) | 47.90(37.80, 58.00) | 6.03 |
| Colak (2012) | 67 50(63 23, 71 77) | 632 |
| Subtotal (l-squared « 98.1%. p- 0.000) -o | 51.64(35.18,68.10) | 37.42 |
| periapicakb Hewing radiographs **1** |  |  |
| Kazemizadeh (2008) | 18.90 (15.40,22 40) | 6.34 |
| Sen er (2009) r - | 45 50 (39 52, 51 48) | 6.25 |
| Ravanshad £015) | 51.00(46.38,55.62) | 6.30 |
| Subtotal (l-squared *= 98.5%, p»* 0.000) | 38.40 (16.40, 60 40) | 1890 |
| OPG 1 |  |  |
| Al-Ghurabi (2012) | 33.90(27.66, 40 14) | 624 |
| Sreelakshmi (2014) • | 54.70 (43 43,65 97) | 5.95 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 90 0%, p= 0.002) | 43.75 (23.39, 64 10) | 12 19 |
| Overall (l-squared = 99.1%, p = 0.000) | 39 23(28 73,49 73) | 100 00 |
| NOTE: Weights are from random effects analysis T“ |  |  |
| -748 o |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ir (B)** |  |  | ES(95%CI) | Weight |
| OPG Sreelakshmi 2014) |  |  | 52.00(40.69,63.31) | 584 |
| Al-Ghurabi (2012) |  |  | 36.00 (28.76, 43.24) | 6.21 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 81 7%, p = 0.019) |  |  | 43.39(27 75. 59 02) | 12 04 |
| periapical radiograph Gulsahi (2009) |  | \_\_ ! | 18.40(13.11,23.69) | 6.34 |
| Turkal (2013) |  |  | 10.00(8.94, 11 06) | 6 49 |
| Udoye (2011) |  | • I | 21 50 (14 44, 28 56) | 622 |
| Kannan(2015) |  |  | 38 50 (30 86,46 14) | 618 |
| Hekmatian (2014) |  | ♦ ‘ | 27.20(21 00. 33.40) | 628 |
| Subtotal (l-squared - 95.8%, p ■ 0.000) |  | o- | 22.80 (12.57,33.03) | 31.51 |
| bite wig radiographs J-N azhan(2011) |  |  | 36.70(31 41,41 99) | 634 |
| Ranjlkar (2002) |  |  | 44.70 (35 91,53.49) | 608 |
| Colak (2012) |  |  | ♦— 58.50(53 35,63 65) | 635 |
| Bains (2014) |  |  | 38.10(32 16,44.04) | 630 |
| Sisman (2012) |  | •l | 30.30 (23.33, 37.27) | 6 23 |
| Javadzadeh (2014) |  | —♦—: | 21.70 (14 32,29 08) | 620 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 94 0%. p = 0.000) |  |  | 38.42 (27 82, 49 02) | 37 49 |
| periapical\*blewing radiographs Sen er (2009) |  |  | 30.70 (25.20, 36.20) | 6.33 |
| Ravanshad (2015) |  | I » | 37 60 (30 92, 44 28) | 625 |
| Kazemizadeh (2008) |  | <o | 21.70(17 17,26.23) | 638 |
| Subtotal (l-squared - 87 7%, p ■ 0.000) |  | 29.75(20 66,38.83) | 18 96 |
| Overall (l-squared = 98.0%, p = 0.000) |  | o | 32.58(24.00,41.15) | 100.00 |
| NOTE: Weights are from random effects analysis |  | I |  |
| -63.6 |  |  | 63.6 |  |
| ID **J<ty (D)** |  |  | ES(95%CI) | Weight |
| OPG Sreelakshmi (2014) |  | ♦ ; | 6.00 (5 30,6.70) | 669 |
| Al-Ghurabi (2012) |  |  | 2 60 (2 30,2.90) | 672 |
| Subtotal (l-squared = 98 7%. p = 0 000) | o |  | 4 28 (0 95,7.62) | 13.41 |
| periapical radiograph Gulsahi (2009) | ■ | • I | 5.00 (4.63,5.37) | 6.72 |
| Turkal (2013) |  | 2.10 (2.01,2.19) | 6.73 |
| Udoye (2011) |  | — | 9 90(818,11.62) | 6 52 |
| Kannan (2015) |  | o | 15.70 (14.01,17 39) | 6 53 |
| Subtotal (l-squared ■ 99.4%, p ■ 0.000) |  | 8.00 (4.96,11.03) | 26.50 |
| bitewing radiographs Al-N azhan (2011) |  | -♦- | 10.20(9 55,10 85) | 6 70 |
| Ranjitkar (2002) |  | 10.10 (9.07,11.13) | 6 65 |
| Colak (2012) |  | I | ♦ 27 80(27.03,28 57) | 669 |
| Bains (2014) |  | ♦ | 12.30 (10.92,1368) | 6 59 |
| Sisman (2012) |  | 15.00(14.16,15 84) | 6 68 |
| Javadzadeh (2014) |  |  | 320 (2.76, 3.64) | 6.71 |
| Subtotal (l-squared ■ 99.8%, p ■ 0.000) |  |  | 13.10(5.50,20 69) | 40.02 |
| periap ical- bite wing radiographs S ener (2009) |  | j  ♦ | 4 80(4 46,5.14) | 6 72 |
| Ravanshad (2015) |  | 11.25(10.57,11 93) | 6 69 |
| Kazemizadeh (2008) |  | <> | 7.90 (6 88. 8 92) | 6 65 |
| Subtotal (l-squared « 99 3%. p « 0 000) |  | 7 98 (3 57.12.39) | 20.07 |
| Overal (l-squared = 99.8%. p = 0.000) |  | O | 9.57 (7.05,12.08) | 100.00 |
| NOTE. Weights are from random effects analysis |  |  | I |  |
| -286 |  |  | 286 |  |

**FIG U R E 2** Prevalence of pulp stones by meta-analysis. A, Forest plot for point and pooled prevalence of pulp stones with 95% confidence interval. B, Point and pooled prevalence of pulp stones among men. C, Point and pooled prevalence of pulp stones among women. D, Point and pooled prevalence of pulp stones per studied teeth

Several studies showed that pulp stone is

more common in nonin-

Pulp stones are

more common in molar teeth compared to

premo-

tact teeth compared to the whole ones.26’27’31 Pulp calcification occurs in nonrepaired decayed teeth indicating that chronic pulp stimulation can be a reason for developing pulp stones.26 Moreover, an association between periodontal diseases and pulp calcification has been observed by other researchers.25 On the other hand, the combination of peri­odontal diseases and pulp stimulation increases the incidence of pulp degeneration and inflammation.25

Few studies have been conducted to assess the association between pulp stones and systematic diseases. The previous findings of the cor­relation between renal and pulp stones are controversial.10’11’13’14 Moreover, the association between cardiovascular diseases and pulp stone has not been observed elsewhere.27 lar ones. It is also more common in premolar teeth than incisor teeth. The most common pulp stones develop in the first molar and premo­lar teeth.32 The reason is this tooth is the first tooth located in the mandibular bone,25 therefore, has a longer exposure to degenerative changes. Also, it has a broader texture and more blood perfusion than the other teeth.25 As reported in most studies,2’24’27-29’32’34 the max­illa is more affected than the mandible. However, the exact mechanism is unknown.

In general, pulp stones cause no limitation for endodontic proce­dures. Although, larger stones can limit access to the root canal. Also, the endodontic devices may be broken by the attached stones makes it difficult to access the canal.25 Therefore, it is recommended to

provide appropriate preoperational imagings and using ultrasonic pro­cedures for effective stone removal. Some of the idiopathic toothaches might be due to the pressure of the larger stones on the sensory nerves within the pulp.25 In general, pulp stones do not need any treatment.

The present study suffers from limitations which are common in the meta-analysis on descriptive and prevalence studies. First, this meta­analysis has a high level of heterogeneity. It seems that heterogene­ity a norm rather than an exception when many primary studies are including in a meta-analysis.37 Second, our primary studies included limited data regarding important determinant factors of the hetero­geneity such as family history of disease of interest (ie, pulp stone), the social status of individuals and medical comorbidity. Thus, the role of these factors in the heterogeneity could not be investigated by meta­regression models.38 Third, results of meta-regression models indi­cate observational associations and was limited by ecological fallacy.39 Therefore, our findings cannot identify a temporal causality in this meta-analysis. More longitudinal studies are required because they can determine the temporal association between predisposing factors and the risk of developing pulp stones. Lack of sufficient evidences from different countries is another limitation of the current study limit­ing the generalizability of the results. The majority of the primary stud­ies were conducted in Middle East countries. Therefore, cultural and ethnic differences in lifestyle and genetic factors may affect the pooled estimates.40 Moreover, we could not recruit studies published by lan­guages other than English. Despite these limitations, this meta-analysis provides the most up-to-date information on the global prevalence of pulp stones.

The current meta-analysis showed that more than one-third of the world population especially women have pulp stones. We also revealed that approximately 10% of teeth are suffering from this problem. The results of meta-analysis on cross-sectional studies can provide several clinical implications including screening, prompts referral and early interventions.41 It is recommended to conduct further studies in term of pulp stone prevalence in all countries to provide better global esti­mates of the problem. Finally, designing studies assessing the poten­tial risk factors of pulp stone can play a critical role in the preventive actions during the health policymaking.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

None.

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**How to cite this article:** Jannati R, Afshari M, Moosazadeh M, Allahgholipour SZ, Eidy M, Hajihoseini M. Prevalence of pulp stones: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Evid Based Med.* 2018;l-7.<https://doi.org/10.llll/jebm.12331>