DR SUHANI GHAI (Orcid ID : 0000-0002-9095-9260)

Article type : Letter to the Editor

If COVID-19 Becomes Endemic will the Current Dental Guidelines Still Remain Valid?

Running Head: Dental Guidelines if COVID-19 Becomes Endemic

Suhani Ghai

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, People’s Dental Academy, Bhopal, India

Correspondence to:
Dr Suhani Ghai
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
People’s Dental Academy, People’s University
Karond By-Pass, Bhanpur, Bhopal-462037
India
Email: suhanighai@gmail.com
Phone: +91-8127070918
Fax no: +91-755-4005362

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: 10.1111/ODI.13484

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If COVID-19 Becomes Endemic will the Current Dental Guidelines Still Remain Valid?

In a recent paper, the authors Jamal et al reviewed various guidelines published by dental societies of the world for the prevention of transmission of COVID-19 virus in the dental care setting.
during the current pandemic (Jamal et al., 2020). While this review is very interesting, I have a genuine apprehension that these guidelines may not be valid for a long time and very soon new guidelines will be required in the unfortunate event of COVID-19 becoming endemic.

Patients of COVID-19, during the early phase of infection, release large amounts of infectious viral particles in the form of droplets from cough, sneeze and respiratory secretions, which are the main modes of transmission of the virus (Peng et al., 2020). This mode of transmission, especially from asymptomatic or pauci-symptomatic patients, puts the dental professionals at an increased risk of infection. Multiple guidelines have been published by various dental and healthcare associations for the dental professionals (Peditto et al., 2020; Martins-Filho et al., 2020; Alharbi et al., 2020; American Dental Association, 2020; CDC, 2020; British Dental Association, 2020; Indian Dental Association, 2020); and the main recommendation of these guidelines has been to postpone all the routine dental procedures and to carry out only emergency dental procedures, till the time this pandemic gets over (Jamal et al., 2020). As a result, during the current pandemic, most routine procedures performed by dentists all around the world, have been suspended, and only emergency procedures and surgeries are being performed.

However, looking at the current increasing trend of COVID-19 cases, it does not appear that this pandemic will end anytime soon. In fact, Dr Mike Ryan, the Executive Director of the World Health Organization's Health Emergencies Programme stated in a press conference on May 13, 2020, “this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities, and this virus may never go away” (BBC News, 2020). Although the vaccine research is going on at a breathtaking pace, it is unlikely to be available in the market anytime soon and vaccinating each and every person may take several years.

If COVID-19 becomes endemic, what will be its impact on the dental practice? Will the existing guidelines of postponing all the routine dental procedures still hold good? Dental professionals cannot keep their routine dental practice suspended permanently as it will have a huge impact on their livelihood. It will also cause distress to the general public who might be forced to take the services of unqualified quacks for their day-to-day dental problems.
The only solution in sight to this problem seems to be the cautious resuming of all the routine dental procedures with appropriate evidence-based precautions. These precautions should be adequately effective in preventing the spread of the virus and cross transmission of infection. In addition, these preventive measures should also be cost-effective so that the high cost of enhanced sanitation and doctor’s personal protective equipment (PPE), should not burden the patients.

Hence, all the existing guidelines, which had recommended suspending of all the routine dental procedures till the time this pandemic gets over, need to be critically revised. The new guidelines need to be formulated for practicing dentists for cautious resuming of all non-emergency routine dental procedures such as scaling, root planning, endodontic and restorative treatment, prosthodontic treatment, orthodontic treatment and oral surgery treatment. The recommendations should focus on being adequately preventive and cost-effective, without exorbitantly enhancing the cost of dental care.
References

Alharbi, A., Alharbi, S., & Alqaidi, S. (2020). Guidelines for dental care provision during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Saudi Dental Journal. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sdentj.2020.04.001

American Dental Association. (2020). ADA Interim Guidance for Management of Emergency and Urgent Dental Care. Retrieved from https://www.ada.org/~/media/CPS/Files/COVID/ADA_Int_Guidance_Mgmt_Emerg-Urg_Dental_COVID19.pdf

BBC News. (2020, May 14). Coronavirus may never go away, WHO warns. BBC News. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52643682

British Dental Association. (2020). Coronavirus: Your FAQs. Retrieved from https://bda.org/advice/Coronavirus/Pages/faqs.aspx

CDC. (2020, February 11). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html

Indian Dental Association. (2020). Covid19 Alert. Retrieved from https://ida.org.in/Home/Covid19Alert

Jamal, M., Shah, M., Almarzooqi, S. H., Aber, H., Khawaja, S., El Abed, R., Alkhatib, Z., & Samaranayake, L. P. (2020). Overview of transnational recommendations for COVID-19 transmission control in dental care settings. Oral Diseases. https://doi.org/10.1111/odi.13431

Martins-Filho, P. R., de Gois-Santos, V. T., Tavares, C. S. S., de Melo, E. G. M., do Nascimento-Júnior, E. M., & Santos, V. S. (2020). Recommendations for a safety dental care management during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. RevistaPanamericana De Salud Publica = Pan American Journal of Public Health, 44, e51. https://doi.org/10.26633/RPSP.2020.51

Peditto, M., Scapellato, S., Marcianò, A., Costa, P., & Oteri, G. (2020). Dentistry during the COVID-19 Epidemic: An Italian Workflow for the Management of Dental Practice. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(9). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093325

Peng, X., Xu, X., Li, Y., Cheng, L., Zhou, X., & Ren, B. (2020). Transmission routes of 2019-nCoV and controls in dental practice. International Journal of Oral Science, 12(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41368-020-0075-9

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved