

Dental Practices during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Guide for Dental Health Professionals

Nauman Rauf Khan

ABSTRACT

Worldwide, health, medical and dental professionals are at the front line of the COVID-19 outbreak and playing at hands with the hazards that put their lives at stake of getting infected. Hazards include pathogen exposure, long working hours, psychological distress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma, and physical and psychological violence. Four specialties are further declared as highly susceptible to contamination with COVID-19 virus which include ENT, Ophthalmology, Dermatology and Dentistry that government was forced to stop their OPDs country wise. Dental practices are those hospital areas that are potentially affected with COVID-19, strict and effective infection control protocols are urgently needed, for this FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) played its role and brought few SOPs for the dental practice which are highlighted in this article. The aim of this manuscript is to help update information among dentist and lead them towards safer dental practice.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, FDI World Dental Federation (FDI), Dentistry.

How to cite this:

Khan NR. Dental practices during COVID-19 pandemic: A guide for dental health professionals. Biomedica. 2020; 36 (COVID19-S2): 35-6.

Dentistry has been evolving through the last few decades but never had it been affected as much as during COVID-19 pandemic. All dental practices were brought to halt universally during this crises time and dentist became highly prone to this disease forcing them to stop their practices immediately. SOPs were developed worldwide for handling only the emergencies and still is been followed all over the world in order to prevent spread of this fatal disease to both physician and the patients. Dentists need to update their information and follow guidance of the infection control health workers.¹

The question is why dentistry is very high-risk field and the answer is why not. The number one source of spread of disease is the air droplets. The

possibility of catching these droplets from the patients and vice versa due to the aerosols produced during the dental treatment is maximum even with the best possible preventive protocols. These droplets can be inhaled, come into contact with skin or mucous membranes, and/or lodge on the surfaces of the dental office or other materials used during the dental appointment where hands can then be contaminated, leading to mass exposure of the disease to all the staff and attendants.²

FDI world dental federation has stated standard precautionary measures protecting both the dentists and the patients. Here is the updated list to encourage all dental health professionals to help them practice safe and take appropriate measures to protect their patients and themselves against infections.³

Correspondence to:
Dr. Nauman Rauf Khan
Head, Department of Oral Pathology
Sharif Medical and Dental College, Lahore-Pakistan.
Email: dr.nrkhan@gmail.com

Adopting the principles of cleanliness and disinfection of all exposed surfaces in the work environment.

- Following protocols accepted and/or recommended by relevant authorities for the decontamination, disinfection, sterilization and reprocessing of reusable instruments and disposal of clinical waste.
- Assuring that sterile instruments are protected from recontamination by using appropriate barrier packaging.
- Using single-use instruments if sterilization is not possible.
- Exercising special care with the use of sharps; removing them from the work area after use and disposing them in a clearly labelled puncture-resistant container.
- Adopting disinfection principles for devices, prostheses, impressions, instruments and applicable items transported to and from the dental laboratory.
- Handling biopsy specimens with care and placing them in leak-proof containers according to the recommended guidelines.
- FDI has provided very helpful measures to the health professional and its practice is mandatory for all dentists worldwide to play their role in this pandemic. FDI has further instructed Dental professionals to take all measures to physically protect themselves which include wearing proper surgical masks, protective eye wear and outer wear. It's important for all dental health professionals to take post-surgical prophylaxis against blood borne pathogens including HBV, HCV and HIV.⁴ In case of any suspicion necessary diagnostic test to be undertaken. It is unethical to deny oral health care to the patients but at the same time it is also the duty of the patients to

disclose about any communicable infections' disease history to their dentists. They should treat patients even if diagnosed with infectious disease through appropriate evaluation and treatment in a supportive environment with full regard to privacy; where by the patient should be aware of the privacy policy. Dental health care provider can share information pertaining to the patient's medical condition with other health workers as permitted by relevant regulations and with the patient's consent.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None to declare.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

None to disclose.

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Dr. Nauman Rauf Khan, [B.D.S, M. Phil, FICD, Ph.D Research Fellow] is presently working as Professor and Head of Oral Pathology Department at Sharif College of Dentistry, Lahore. He also holds the designation of Executive Director, Pakistan Society of Oral Pathology (PSOMP) and is also an Editor & Deputy Regent Pakistan for International College of Dentistry (ICD). His research interests include Oral histopathology, immunohistochemistry and molecular pathology. He has over 19 research publications in both local & international indexed journals. He is a busy practicing dental surgeon in Lahore and his professional experiences during COVID-19 led him to write this manuscript for Biomedica.