

Challenges to ponder upon

I had come across a very pertinent article in Dental Tribune International and thought of highlighting the issue with respect of oral health and orthodontic care in Pakistan.

The FDI World Dental Federation reported a great offset between available dentists to population ratio in developing countries of South America, Africa and Asia.¹ Pakistan being a prominent developing Asian country somewhat faces similar problems. We don't have published data on dentist to population ratio in Pakistan, however in the first volume of POJ there was an article published on Orthodontist to population ratio in Islamabad and Rawalpindi division, suggesting yet again an offset between Orthodontists and population ratio in this region.²

The solution to this problem can be many. However pragmatic solutions can be controlling population increase, increasing dental graduates or patient education. Controlling population increase is not in our control. Speaking of increasing dental graduates however is also not solving much problem. In the last ten years Pakistan has produced more than ten thousand dentists. Most remain in the urban areas and big cities after graduation. Bigger cities have rather been saturated by dentists. A lot of these young graduates opt to leave the country for a better future. Hence the problem has not greatly improved.

This leads to the emphasis on patient education and improved community service. Pakistan lacks an oral health policy. Need of the hour is to develop customized policies by the regulatory authorities in Pakistan, targeting these issues. We need to ponder upon these challenges and visualize how to overcome the highlighted problems during the next decade.

References

1. FDI highlights oral health challenges in developing countries [www.dental-tribune.com] 2014 Mar 14 [cited 2015 May 15]. Available from: http://www.dental-tribune.com/articles/news/europe/17230_fdi_highlights_oral_health_challenges_in_developing_countries.html
2. Khan MA, Qazi HS, Farooq U. Demographics of orthodontists in Islamabad and Rawalpindi division. POJ.2009;1(2):10-13.

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