

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on dentistry in Pakistan

In December 2019, the novel corona-virus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome that became known as COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, a Chinese province of Hubei. In the last week of January 2020 it was already an epidemic and then in March 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as a pandemic. The first case in Pakistan was reported in February 2020 and by the end of March 2020 Pakistan was locked down. The rest is history, albeit history that is constantly being rewritten: as new cases of COVID-19 worldwide are being confirmed daily and the death toll rising.

COVID-19 has had a great impact on dentistry in Pakistan. Most practices and dental hospitals reduced work or in fact closed down for a few weeks initially. Only emergency and urgent dental problems are being treated. Elective procedures halted and parked for a later time. Undergraduate and postgraduate clinical training is greatly suffering. New methods of teaching and learning being introduced and working (teaching) online from home has become a common method for all. Significant increase in the use of some of the personal protective equipment (PPE) from pre to during lockdown is seen as dentists are afraid of being infected during the dental procedures. Digital dentistry, telephonic video consultations, use of the rubber dam, distancing of the appointments, limited aerosol generating procedures, innovations in procedural methods and further infra-structural changes at the dental operatories were necessary to reduce the contagion among dentists, staff and patients.

Apart from the enormous impact it has created on our lives and profession, we must learn from the situation. It is the right time to re-define and re-think our role, trying to learn the lesson that the current situation is teaching us and prepare well for the future, by changing our mindset and widening our resources.

Dentists just need to keep in mind that adjustment to a new future reality appears inevitable for both patients and professionals who provide care. The lesson we all need to learn is simple: be adaptable, be empathetic, and always try to provide the best care to patients, while learning from challenges.

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