



Samsāra: Restoring Patient Confidence by Redefining How We Practice Dentistry

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Article Info

Article type:

Letter to the Editor

Article History:

Received: 27 Aug 2020

Accepted: 25 Sept 2020

Published: 24 Oct 2020

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Cite this article as: Marya A. Samsāra: Restoring Patient Confidence by Redefining How We Practice Dentistry. *Front Dent.* 2020;17:25. doi: 10.18502/fid.v17i25.4625

Dear Editor,

In the words of Charles Darwin, “it is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change”. Since the start of the year, the novel coronavirus has affected the lives of millions of people around the world [1]. This includes dentists who have to face the same scenario and a greater risk because of the proximity to patients in which they normally operate. As lockdowns around the world are being relaxed and dental practices are starting to reopen, another concern faced by most practitioners is the lack of patients because of the risks of cross-infection. The novel coronavirus has caused extensive damage to both life and economy and it has also given us a chance to adapt and make changes to the way we do things. There is a word in Sanskrit which comes to mind, Samsāra, which basically refers to the cyclicity of all life, matter, and existence. The term implies the concept of reincarnation and reimagining a new life.

With the virus becoming increasingly ubiquitous, humanity must learn a new way of living. This includes changes that must

be made to the way we practice dentistry as a whole. To reassure patients to visit dental clinics, steps must be taken to ensure their safety as well as that of the treating dentists and clinic staff. Presence of screening booths outside the clinic, regular monitoring of temperature, as well as spaced seating are just some of the measures that can be incorporated. Spacing-out patient appointments to ensure adequate sterilization of the treating area, as well as incorporation of air filters, UV light sterilization, and fumigation are some of the additional recommendations. The existing patients must be made aware of the protective measures and guidelines being followed by the clinic to help rebuild their confidence. Technological advances can help us in a variety of ways from online consultations to establishing correct diagnosis and even formulating a treatment plan utilizing digital records [2]. According to the latest guidelines by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, dental clinics have been put in a unique category where specific infection control measures are required [3]. The suggestions are that dental clinics should:

- Implement tele-dentistry and triaging protocols.
- Screen and triage everyone for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Encourage physical distancing and spaced seating.
- Implement universal protection measures at all times during treatment.

- Carry out careful sanitization of the treatment areas, and practice strict sterilization measures.
- Ensure that dental healthcare professionals do not come into contact with respiratory secretions during treatment by using eye protection along with facemasks.

That said, financial implications for the above-mentioned measures and methods must be considered as it may not translate to the revenue that could be generated soon. All said and done, it is time to re-define the way we practice dentistry with even more emphasis on patient protection than before. Although the current situation seems disastrous for dental practice, we need to implement such measures as this virus may exist in our community at least for the foreseeable future.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None declared.

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