



Smoking Cessation through Dentists

Asaad J Mirza*

Professor, Department of Operative Dentistry, Baqai Medical University, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** Asaad J Mirza, Professor, Department of Operative Dentistry, Baqai Medical University, Pakistan.

Received: July 10, 2019; **Published:** July 12, 2019

Tobacco consumption is one of the most prevalent public health threats the world has ever faced. It kills more than 7 million people a year. In USA alone, 20% deaths occur because of smoking menace. The tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemicals of which many are considered fatally injurious to human health and can cause multiple pathological conditions in a consumer. Cigarette smoking has been found associated with growth of cataract in the eyes and pneumonia and has been related to high majority of all cases of pulmonary cancer. It is also vastly linked with mouth and throat cancer. In addition to cancer, smoking causes pulmonary diseases such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema. It has also been revealed that smoking significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, heart attack, vascular disease, and aneurysm. Research also connects relationship between blood cancer and smoking habit. Non-smokers who breathe in an environment where smoking is done like café, closed offices, houses etc. are considered passive smokers. They also equally suffer the health hazards of tobacco smoking. There is conclusive evidence that shows that unintentional exposure to tobacco smoke put them at a greater risk of all the diseases a smoker suffers from.

Moreover, the expenses of tobacco go far beyond the dreadful health consequences. It is a major economic burden on poor families and is a major encumber to sustainable development. It is worth mentioning here that the collective prevalence of tobacco use is frequently found highest among those with low academic background and inferior socioeconomic levels. WHO in February, 2005 enforced an evidence based treaty known as Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) that emphasizes the right of people to stay healthy at the utmost level of health and highlights the impact of tobacco control programs on plummeting the nasty burden.

It is now universally agreed that helping tobacco users to quit tobacco use is a responsibility of health professionals and an effective role of dentists in this regard has also been universally recognized. Dentists often have a longstanding venerable relationship with their patients and see them on frequently regular basis. Evidence suggests that a brief advice given by a dentist which involves personalized opinion through oral examination increases rate of quitting tobacco consumption.

Dental practitioners meet tobacco consumers routinely but fail to perform their role of tobacco cessation counseling due to lack of knowledge, training and confidence in it. This obviously requires proper education and training. Various studies have been conducted globally to find out the reasons for dentists not taking part in this noble goal of tobacco cessation. The foremost reason was found to be the lack of concerned training and education. An Indian study reveals that undergraduate students when educated didactically and practically for smoking cessation counseling, not only induced interest in the participants but also motivated them and improved their skills.

To help combat the dilemma of tobacco-related ailments and to assist in educating and training dentists to take tobacco cessation counseling roles, dental school curricula require modification and need to add appropriate didactic and clinical tobacco use cessation curriculum content in it. It must ensure to establish tobacco cessation as a mandatory clinical competency for a dental graduate along with other professional competencies. Dental practitioners when surveyed to perform this role showed their overwhelming positive response.

Policy makers in health sector and dental curriculum designers should therefore look into the matter seriously to incorporate smoking cessation counseling and intervention in the dental

curriculum. In the most developing countries this role of the dentists will definitely have positive outcomes and help to reduce the ever escalating burden of oral and systemic diseases associated with tobacco consumption. Dentists' professional organizations and associations should be made responsible to connect in tobacco control initiatives including supporting political processes that lead to an atmosphere favorable to good health.

Volume 2 Issue 8 August 2019

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