

Information: the Key to a Safe Practice

As dental professionals we are familiarized with all the necessary measures to assure the safety of our patients, the dental staff, ourselves and our families. Living and working through this pandemic, COVID-19 has reminded us how fragile the symbiosis between microorganisms and humans is and it has driven us to face new challenges to maintain safety measures. Change, in general, involve a certain amount of fear due to the uncertainty of a particular circumstance, so it'd be natural to feel apprehension as we start going back to our practices in the midst of a pandemic. As it pertains to SARS-CoV-2, we've yet to understand a good deal about this virus and how it affects our health. We still need to figure out how to develop new diagnostic tools that are more efficient and accessible to all. Potentially effective treatments for COVID-19 are being tested to reduce the hospitalization time and the mortality rate. And big strides are being made to produce a vaccine which could prevent us from getting sick or spread the virus. Time will be of great aid to learn more about the virus, and the prevention and treatment of this disease, but in the meantime, dentists need to embrace change and move forward.

This isn't the first time the world has been shaken by an infectious deadly virus. In the 1980's HIV/AIDS became a threat particularly to dentists, due to our direct exposure to the patient's blood. Hence, we developed and improved our safety protocols radically. The use of examination gloves, masks, and protective glasses was not universal practice back then and would mostly be used for surgical procedures. Nowadays, most dentists use these (and probably more) protective gear to do a routine oral examination. Disinfection of the clinical area, sterilization of dental instruments and disposable personal protective equipment have made our practices safe from cross-contaminants. As a global society, we've learned the risks and how to prevent transmission of HIV, and although it's still a prevalent disease worldwide with no found cure, we've learned to adapt our safety measures and make them a part of our daily lives. So, there is no reason why we wouldn't adjust to the threat of this new virus and enhance the safety measures in our practices.

It's time we acknowledge that this new coronavirus is going to be a part of our lives for some time ahead and it's our responsibility to adapt as soon as possible to this "new normal". As health professionals, we need to transmit this confidence to our patients and make it evident to them that we are keeping ourselves informed and that we are implementing all the safety measures that our profession recommends to keep them safe. As new standards and regulations are implemented globally and locally, it is our responsibility to stay informed with scientific sources. We should continually examine the scientific papers that are being published regarding the different aspects of this disease and we must draw our own conclusions in order to apply them in our practices and our every-day life. We are persistently bombarded with information from the media, which is sometimes misleading and erratic.

Unfortunately, patients are also exposed to this data coming from the media which sometimes could cloud their criteria and judgement. In ODOVTOS-International Journal of Dental Sciences, we are thoroughly reviewing all the literature submitted to our journal about SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. This allows us to prioritize and publish sound scientific-based research papers, literature reviews, and letters to the editor. We are publishing different perspectives on how this pandemic affects dentistry, aspects that pertain to dental schools and in what way e-learning tools could be employed, and the virtualization and simulation of the dental education among other topics. We thank the authors and we are sure that more information will be shared in the coming issues. We welcome researchers to keep investigating and writing on SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 and to contribute to the body of knowledge and dissemination of scientific facts which could help us better understand this disease.

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