



Short Communication

Burnout perception among the dentists, during and after COVID-19 pandemic

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25-05-2023

Accepted 03-07-2023

Available online 31-07-2023

Keywords:

Burn out

Dentistry

Work related stress

Occupational hazards

and social interactions

ABSTRACT

Background: Burnout is a phenomenon comprising emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Different opinions and view makes it difficult to explain this malady. Dentistry is a stressful occupation, the influences and causes contributing to burn out state in dentistry, surpassed with sudden declaration of pandemic situation.

Materials and Methods: Google search, PubMed, Cochrane review, other online resources and articles regarding burnout in dentistry, its relation during pandemic and how to manage the situation.

Results: Besides jobs being at stake, dentists working during pandemic were stressful and exhausted with number of additional measures taken to create a safe environment for their employees, assistants, patients and themselves. Apart from this, they managed to treat the patients with acute pain and emergency surgeries too were carried out. Hence the state of mind is also significant, regardless of work load. Many dental association's offer resources, support for dental professionals and counsel the ones who are affected by work and personal stress.

Conclusion: this paper gives an insight to burnout among dentists during and after covid -19 and boost dentists to be proactive in taking care of themselves and if needed, ask for help.

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1. Background

Principal goal line of all the clinicians is to treat and care their patients in the best possible way, irrespective of health or the situation in which the care giver is. Outlining burnout in a word is difficult as it could mean different things, to different people. In simple term it's the mental exhaustion or erosion of human soul as per Maslach and Leiter.¹ It is considered as a syndrome that comprises emotional exhaustion (enthusiasm for work), depersonalization (feelings of cynicism), and a low sense of personal accomplishment, that is attributable to work related stress. Regardless of the report showing 88 percent of dentists in good or excellent health, some studies show

one out of ten dentists having poor general health, and three out of ten dentists reporting with poor physical state.²

Bearing in mind that, dentistry is a stressful occupation; we have come a long way managing the workloads, co-workers, occupational hazards, and social interactions. The influences and causes contributing to burn out state in dentistry, surpassed with sudden declaration of pandemic situation.³ Direct contact with infectious patients, deficient safety and higher risk of exposure to virus were the contributing factors to enfeeblement in health care workers, which includes dentists who are at greater risk for exposure due to the nature of work, which includes aerosols and direct contact with patients. Moreover, shutting down the practices during lockdown, suspension of staff by the dental institutes in many countries, occupational detachment and lack of financial support from government and deaths added to the

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financial pressure.

Besides jobs being at stake, dentists working during pandemic were stressful and exhausted with number of additional measures taken to create a safe environment for their employees, assistants, patients and themselves.⁴ The PPE was worn for minimum of half an hour to an hour while treating a single patient and was disposed after every patient. During that one hour, the sweat and urge of urination was beyond expressing, since air conditioning the area was also considered to be dangerous as the virus (if any) will be let circulating within the arena. Apart from this, all patients were treated with a possibility of contracting SARS-CoV-2. In the meantime, the suspension of educational institutions has also affected dental education. Dental students were staying at home and learning online during this pandemic. However, reports suggests that the suspension of educational and research activities can lead to frustration.⁵

Apart from all the difficulties faced and with all the norms, the dentist in most of the places still managed to treat the patients with acute pain and emergency surgeries too were carried out. Finances, peer pressure, competitions, institution expectations or requirements have always been a key to depression in many professions but dentists always are underrated compared to the hard work put in for studies, amount spent for education, investing in clinics and of course time/skill required in treating individual patients. Shunning of dental personnel's in the public health emergency management system is always overlooked.⁶ In most countries, dentists do not participate in the direct care of patients infected with COVID-19.

Despite all the adversity faced, dentists are still hopeful that this pandemic will strengthen us as individuals and as a system.⁷ Widespread stressors will emerge even after the pandemic or will be exacerbated.⁸ Keeping psychological health in mind, it should be realized that the COVID-19 pandemic is unfamiliar and each individual experiences and responds very differently. For these reasons, it's crucial to take good care of one self and should go at one's own pace.

Many dental association's offer resources, support for dental professionals and counsel the ones who are affected by work and personal stress. Plus institutions like the American Dental Association have online courses to provide an overview of the return to work after COVID-19 quarantine.⁹

Besides this, individuals at every level like organization, team leaders, staff members should bring in the difference

to the mental health care, and to identify and encourage opportunities to find growth and meaning in this situation.¹⁰

2. Source of Funding

None.

3. Conflict of Interest

None.

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Cite this article: Naik V, Prakash S. Burnout perception among the dentists, during and after COVID-19 pandemic. *Arch Dent Res* 2023;13(1):57-58.