



One Tooth or Many: Why Teamwork is Essential for Overall Health

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Abstract

A team approach, one tooth or many essentially involves tackling dental problems with comprehensive treatment plans that solve patients' problems and expectations, subsequently leading to consistent long-term results for overall health. It is important for dentists and doctors of any speciality to understand this concept and to work together. Interdisciplinary dentistry is one of the great strengths of our dental fraternity. A team of dentists all trained in different specialties makes us unique due the synergy that exists between the entire team of doctors. That is why we are capable of performing highly difficult dental treatments with teamwork; each one contributing their knowledge within their dental discipline. In interdisciplinary cases, the treatment plan needs to address individual requirements and to coordinate sequential clinical stages. This article enlightens the advantages and hurdles to overcome for effective implementation of interdisciplinary dentistry in clinical practise.

Keywords: Teamwork; Interdisciplinary dentistry; Overall health; Clinical practise

Introduction

A variety of tangled connections exists between different biological tissues in the oral cavity. There are more diverse issues that our orofacial structures can face. A single general dentist cannot always solve some of the complex orofacial problems. This is when the dentist will traditionally refer patient to a specialist in order to seek additional expertise. The requirement of specialties is only for academic convenience and growth of proficiency in the subject. More so, the oral tissues and the oral cavity cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the body. In a complex case, there would be several referrals to different specialists over the course of treatment, which would cause time lag and miscommunication. To provide optimal oral health, we should practise interdisciplinary dentistry also known as multidisciplinary dentistry. It is a dental treatment that involves the use of different specialties and techniques of dentistry under one roof. In this team approach the specialists work together and share their skills, expertise, communication, and trust, in order to provide more accurate diagnosis, and develop a more effective treatment plan for the patient. One may think that it will take up

too much time, be too complicated, or overwhelm patients. In reality, it is exactly the opposite. By taking the initiative to create an interdisciplinary team, we will save time and energy in the long run by streamlining and simplifying the process of referrals and working with other specialists. Most importantly, we will be ensuring that our patients receive the best possible care at every step of the treatment process.

Bridging the Gap

In recent times the individual practice of the dental practitioner is becoming more of a team activity. Teamwork and collaboration between healthcare professionals have an impact on achieving higher quality of oral and general health care, along with proper function, an ideal aesthetic outcome and greater patient satisfaction. At the outset, the greater or lesser complexity of the treatment will lead to the participation of a greater or lesser number of specialists. A reliable and promising treatment is often the outcome of mutual coalition of the concerned specialties. Moreover, the patients are also becoming aware and willing to accept toilsome treatment options to achieve aesthetic and functional corrections. The clinicians are also welcoming the need

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for comprehensive involvement of mastery for the overall preciseness of the profession. This changing psychological scenario has made interdisciplinary approach a prerequisite. Teamwork is the backbone of interdisciplinary dentistry, as it bridges the ineludibly gaps that exist between different domains of dentistry. True teamwork can be established when there is mutual respect. Any differences and personal priorities should be put aside and should mainly focus on what is good for the practice and the patients. Teamwork cannot be achieved in an instant, it takes time and practice. In addition, the importance of each member's willingness to commit to a specific set of goals and ethics is paramount. Everyone should be comfortable asking for help when the need for it arises, because if one of the members is not, then that is a sure-fire sign that the team lacks trust. It is important to put your trust in the people you work with to give them the confidence that they are doing well. Doing so will enable them to dedicate and focus on their tasks as well as their areas of expertise.

Benefits of Teamwork in Dentistry

- By working together with other specialists, we can create a more accurate diagnosis.
- We stay in constant communication with one another, which greatly reduces confusion and stress, for all specialists involved, and for the patient.
- We can get the treatments the patient needs that we usually cannot provide in clinics without a specialist.
- The patients have the advantage of being presented with multiple treatment options.
- The patients are kept in the loop during the development of their treatment plan and throughout the entire treatment process.
- Including the patient in this way not only brings treatment to a new level, but it also provides optimal customer service from our dental practice.

Current Scenario

The clinicians who preferred interdisciplinary approach have seen results worth noticing. Specialists with varied astute and expertise gather as a team to work jointly, to identify the problems, plan treatment and systematically execute them. Despite all advantages, there is hesitance amongst clinicians to embrace interdisciplinary approach whole-heartedly. The reasons could be professional ego, financial disputes or failure to reach consensus. Everyone in the team, will have to work with an open mind, listening to suggestions of all, discuss the pros and cons of every treatment option and expedite the best possible plan. Considering the benefits of the system, the caregivers must overlook petty ego and monetary clashes and join hands for the overall sake of

patients and the society at large. Our basic and foremost aim, is to provide the best possible treatment to the patients. Another important zone of interdisciplinary has evolved with the identification of the association between oral and systemic health. The bilateral relationship calls for the establishment of an interdisciplinary approach between oral and general specialties. As evident from the impact of chronic periodontal inflammation on diabetes and cardiovascular diseases and vice versa, interdisciplinary approach can have a huge impact on diagnosis and management of systemic ailments. Few recently published successful teamwork in dentistry using innovative interdisciplinary strategies included the management of children with special care, developmental anomalies of dental and facial structure, geriatric patients, patients with systemic complications, severely misaligned teeth with advanced bone loss, aesthetic rehabilitation. For instance, while treating a subgingivally fractured teeth, it included team work between an orthodontist for orthodontic extrusion, a periodontist for fibrotomy and surgical crown lengthening, an endodontist for reattachment and endodontic treatment, and a prosthodontist for cast post-core system and a crown.

Future Trends

The idea of a multidisciplinary approach to face the challenges posed by dentistry has been fully taken on board in Spain by the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) and by European Association of Osseointegration (EAO). This type of approach, apply multidisciplinary dentistry based on scientific evidence and high clinical qualification, with flawlessly structured teams, to afford patients the best results. Recently the focus has been on the collaboration between different branches of dentistry, emphasising the idea of seeing oral health from a team perspective. Furthermore, the foundations are being laid for extending this team vision and multidisciplinary approach to other medical specialties, particularly due to the growing evidence of the systemic nature of various oral diseases. There is an absolute necessity to include the concept of teamwork in the undergraduate curriculum thereby stressing the importance of specialisation.

Conclusion

A team approach, one tooth or many essentially involves tackling dental problems with comprehensive treatment plans that solve patients' problems and expectations, subsequently leading to consistent long-term results for overall health. It is important for dentists and doctors of any speciality to understand this concept and to work together. This is a critical factor to achieve patients' long-term health stability. As the saying goes "Alone we can do a little, together we can do so much", it is the need of an hour to



come together and broaden the horizon of our knowledge and skill and provide better services to the patients and the mankind.

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