

## Dental Jousting - A Blame Game: A Threat from the Insider to the Dental Fraternity

**Manoj Ramugade<sup>1\*</sup>, Dharna Bharat Parekh<sup>2</sup>, Sayed Abrar Bashir Ahmed<sup>3</sup>, Kishor Sapkale<sup>1</sup>, Gulam Anwar Naviwala<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, Government Dental College and Hospital, Mumbai, India

<sup>2</sup>Private Practitioner, Pinky's Dental care, Mumbai, India

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor and Head of Department, Department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, Government Dental College and Hospital, Mumbai, India

<sup>4</sup>Medical Officer (Dental), Directorate of Health Services, Mumbai, India

**\*Corresponding Author:** Manoj Ramugade, Associate Professor, Department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, Government Dental College and Hospital, Mumbai, India.

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### Abstract

Bad mouthing or Jousting about the fellow dental colleague is a pandemic practice though it is unethical. Dental Jousting (DJ) is an undesirable conduct on the part of the dental professional, which not only infringes the patient's trust for a dentist but may also strain the inter colleague relationship. As a cumulative ill-effect this can erode the overall dignity and credibility of the dental profession in the society which will be deleterious to the professionals and the population alike. This communication analyses the common causes and patterns of dental jousting and suggests means to curb this undesirable behavior.

**Keywords:** Dental Jousting; Dentist; Professional Ethics; Legal Hassles

### Abbreviation

DJ: Dental Jousting

### Introduction

Let me start with an incident, without myself knowing whether it is a fact or a fiction. A very young dental professional started his practice nearby to a most senior dentist in the town. When a patient reported to him and took junior dentist's name the senior mentioned that, "What that kid can do? I myself have removed his milk teeth". Marked the notoriety of the patient, he passed that comment to young dentist when he visited to him. A young dentist replied, "Convey to the senior that, I will be happy to make a complete denture for him".

We all are practicing dental professionals; very often have an urge to pass derogatory comments related to our fellow dental practitioners. This often is done without finding or confirming the past circumstances and incidences. Sometimes a dental professional may indulge into bad mouthing about others in order to prove himself or herself superior to others in front of the patients. Sometimes this may even be done intentionally. This behavior though unwanted, undesirable and damaging, is found to be pandemic. Making derogatory remarks on the assistant doctor or the colleague is called as 'Medical Jousting' [1,2]. When a dental practitioner exhibits such behavior it may be termed as Dental Jousting (DJ). In simple words its bad mouthing or backbiting about your own dental colleague which has treated patients previously or may treat the same patient in the future.

DJ when committed as, 'slight moments', may not have significant effect on a patient. However, the patient may take it very seriously. Sometimes patient may not even understand the exact intention of the dentist and perceive the comments through their own biased perspective. A few patients may blow such comments out of proportion and the things may snowball into bigger misunderstanding or lead to embarrassing situation. Sometimes critical, unduly vigilant, opportunistic and dissatisfied patients may not give sufficient opportunity to both the dentists to clarify their conversation and start an argument.

Such jousting will always lead to bad professional relationship among the professionals. The circumstances can lead to loss of faith or trust of a particular patient in person towards the dental professional. Patients influenced by jousting may spoil the name of victimized dentist. DJ can lead to loss of practice, professional reputation, credibility and finance to possibly an innocent colleague; who had never got an opportunity to explain him/herself before he/she suffered the loss.

When things go out of hand, patient may indulge into verbal spat with the dentist or may even lodge a formal complaint of negligence for litigation and compensation [3]. DJ spoon-fed and trouble the dentist and demand the compensation from the litigation or consideration for out of court settlement.

When things get messy, it doesn't remain pleasure for either of the dentist. The one who jostled has testify in the court of law about the wrong behavior of the previous dentist and the one who has been alleged to have committed wrong will have to fight and oppose the other's testimony. This in Layman's language may be called as, "Washing your dirty linen in the public".

Culturally, the component of personal relationship is the primary driving force that rives a patient to doctor in our country. It takes decades of mouth to mouth publicity for a dentist to develop a successful career. Praising words spread slowly and echoed bleakly whereas DJ can spread as jungle fire. This can take a dentist's whole career down in no time. Thus, every dentist should think rationally before they speak otherwise they may be the next victim of such unsporting scenario [4].

Even though we are into a noble profession the natural characteristics of human behavior such as jealousy, grudge, hatred or revenge exist in all of us. The dentist should practice a lot of restrain before commenting about other fellow colleague. Even though situation demands he/she should select correct and apt vocabulary to describe the facts. At the same time, one needs to uphold his/her ethical, professional and moral duty to speak and act in the best interest of patient's health and not necessarily be a partner in the crime with the fellow colleague.

**Certain unethical comments/unintentional talks may be regarded as dental jousting (DJ):**

1. Is this treatment done by that junior or the senior dentist?
2. Has that dentist done all examination and X-rays before starting your treatment?
3. Has he/she prescribed you such heavy doses of medicines?
4. He/she should not prescribe these medicines!
5. Why he/she has done such a root canal? X-ray shows a bad root canal treatment...
6. That dentist has done too much cutting of tooth which was not required...
7. Did he/she explain you the risk and problems to you before starting the treatment?
8. Do you know that there is a file broken in your tooth which was done by the previous dentist?
9. The problem is with the other tooth and not the tooth which got extracted by that dentist...
10. The treatment given by that dentist is wrong and obsolete.
11. That dentist is not good...
12. That dentist does not know anything...etc.

**Untoward effects of Dental Jousting (DJ)**

There are various types of DJ (Figure 1) and the effects of DJ would be unimaginable and the dentist would not have thought the repercussions of it when they made such allegations or wrong or faulty comments about another dentist. It may lead to:

- Loss of trust and confidence in the previous dentist.
- Loss of ability of the patient to believe the new dentist in the future.
- The social reputation of the dentist can be destroyed due to jousting and bad-mouthing the same by the patient to other patients and relatives.
- Patients get encouragement to take legal actions against the previous dentist for dental negligence and the malpractice.
- Increase distress in the profession.
- Increase number of litigations of dental negligence.

**Measures to prevent Dental Jousting (DJ)**

- Follow the dental ethical guidelines.
- Consider and treat the fellow colleague dentist as a supporter and not a competitor or enemy.
- Practice thinking rationally and morally.
- Using the words cautiously especially about fellow colleagues.
- Respect the fellow professional dentists.
- Keep interest of patient as the top priority but not at the expense of profession and professional ethics.
- Make the dental practice homely and enjoyable for every patient and dental professional.

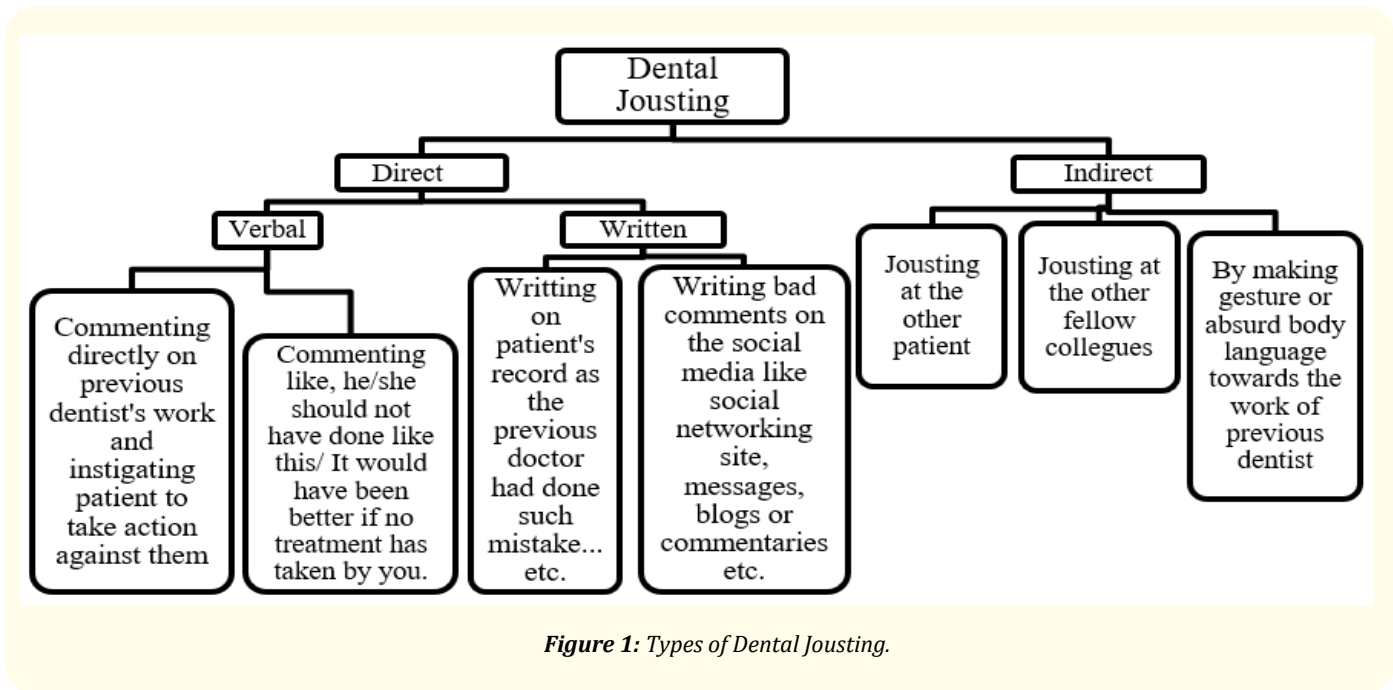


Figure 1: Types of Dental Jousting.

**Conclusion**

A DJ is a mudslinging which will never be stopped. This behavior may culminate into a chain reaction and will jeopardize the dignity of entire dental professionals in the world. It should be a collective effort initiated by the entire dental community to be more diligent and practiced optimum restraint when they might find themselves in these situations.

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