

What is the Mission of Pediatric Dentists during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

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Following the outbreak of Coronavirus in the world, most pediatric dentists have faced a very serious challenge that is related to both their health and the health of their pediatric patients. Most parents are afraid that their children will get an infectious disease, so they might only go to the dentist in case of a dental emergency or even use the home remedy to relieve the dental pain. The important thing is that they are too worried about this epidemic, and unfortunately, by delaying dental treatment, they endanger the health of their children with problems such as dental abscesses. However, all health researchers are trying to find a way to eradicate the disease, this has not been achieved so far.

As pediatric dentists, we should better to approach this issue with a scientific perspective. With the knowledge that the risk is even more serious in pediatric dentistry and the children may do not show any signs/symptoms related to coronavirus, we should follow some guidelines and protocols to reduce the spread of infections. Thus, pediatric dentists have to be concerned about patient's screening, incomplete infection control and management of dental healthcare practice.

Most researchers believe the possible routes of COVID-19 transmission involve inhalation of airborne microorganisms. Direct contact with blood, conjunctiva and eyes, nose, and oral mucosa with droplets such as saliva and aerosols that could result in infections are other possible factors of spreading the virus.

Aerosols are the principal reason for panic during this pandemic; hence, using high-volume oral suctions may reduce the aerosol particles before they leave the mouth. On the other hand, Air-cleaning systems also used for the same purpose significantly eliminate the potentially hazardous aerosols created as have been indicated by some studies. We believe since aerosols and salivary pathogens can be transmitted to the entire dental environment, the use of a proper and strong ventilation system can prevent the spread of the virus in the environment. The system must be on all the time to evacuate the particles out of the environment.

Nowadays, teledentistry has now become an integral part of health care; hence, dental practitioners should keep in mind that the first thing before starting is gathering information about the child's oral health by phone. In case the dental treatment is not urgent, the treatment should be postponed and give the parents the necessary consultation. If the child needs dental emergency treatment, the dentist should proceed as soon as possible under an updated management protocol.

Upon the arrival of the child, the body temperature of the patient and his/her companion should be controlled. Handwashing procedures, wearing the personal protective dress and accessories (eyewear, masks, gloves, caps, face shields, surgical clothes, and shoe-cover) are essential for the dental team before entering the examination room. On the other hand, the child should be equipped with the necessary personal protective dressings. Before and after every dental procedure, careful disinfection of all the surrounding surfaces should be implemented.

We overemphasize that dentists should avoid or minimize operations that can produce droplets or aerosols. Application of rubber dam, double and high-volume saliva ejectors, anti-retraction hand-pieces, and hand instruments have to be used to eliminate the viral spread.

The point to note is that, for children, the time of dental treatment should be shortened. Therefore, for emergency treatments, we recommend using sedation such as nitrous oxide to control the child's behavior and minimizing the time of dental work.

Finally, we believe that all pediatric dentists around the world should share their information and updated instructions using the webinar so that we should be able to reach a unique guideline and protocol [1-3].

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