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Letter to Editor

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The Need for Re-education of Dental Practitioners Regarding the Management of Dental Infections During The COVID-19 Pandemic: From The Perspective of A Dual-Degree Oral And Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic

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**The Need For Re-education of Dental Practitioners Regarding The Management of
Dental Infections During The COVID-19 Pandemic:
From The Perspective of A Dual-Degree Oral And Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic**

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Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals around the world implement various measures to prevent the spread of infection among medical staff. Due to an excessive overload of intensive care units (ICUs), medical staff of various disciplines was assigned to COVID-19 patients upon the official announcement of the outbreak. In the countries where education to become an oral and maxillofacial surgeon (OMFS) requires a degree in both stomatology (DDS) and medicine (MD), OMFSs were also assigned to work in ICUs to manage the COVID-19 patients. On the other hand, some of the departments, including oral and maxillofacial surgery clinics, have also decided to work in double teams to ensure that only one team had a patient contact and the remaining half of the staff could be protected from COVID-19 infection.¹

The suspension of management of the patients by dental practitioners since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the referral of the patients to emergency services at university clinics. Considering the preventive measures which might result in inadequate number of medical staff and overloading maxillofacial surgery departments, there is a growing need for cooperation between dental practitioners and oral and maxillofacial surgery emergency services.

Infections of the oral and maxillofacial region could vary from easily-manageable dento-alveolar abscesses to complicated deep-neck space infections. Dental practitioners, who are responsible for the first-line dental emergency care, should be prepared to deal with any infection-related emergencies involving the oral and maxillofacial region. Moreover, the conditions which require inpatient treatment such as; intravenous antimicrobial therapy, extra-oral incisions, elimination of the specific reason and /or the patients with existing co-morbidities should be correctly recognized and if necessary, the patient should be quickly referred to a hospital nearby with an emergency maxillofacial surgery department or maxillofacial surgery consultant.²

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need of early and proper diagnosis and if possible, adequate management of oral and maxillofacial infections by dental practitioners to avert patients from emergency services to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and to reduce the workload of oral and maxillofacial departments.³ Dental practitioners' knowledge of the management of patients with systemic diseases, familiarity with anatomic boundaries and fascial spaces, identification capability of the source of infection, surgical experience, awareness of a possible antimicrobial resistance and correct decision on referral to an appropriate provider if indicated is very important.⁴ Therefore, the knowledge of dental practitioners about the management of patients with oral and maxillofacial infections should be immediately refreshed and/or expended.

Nowadays, many professional learning activities or education on dentistry faculties could be conducted via distance-based courses online. Accordingly, local webinars might be helpful in increasing the knowledge of dental practitioners and ensure the cooperation among first- and second line emergency dental care providers.

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