

Dental Patients' Perspective on COVID-19: A Systematic Review

Subjects: Infectious Diseases | Dentistry, Oral Surgery & Medicine

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The COVID-19 epidemic has changed patients' approach to dental treatments. While dentists worldwide have shown an excellent level of adaptability to face the new challenges presented by the unprecedented situation due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, dental patients have witnessed a sudden suspension of elective treatments and a slow resumption of dental care activities after several national lockdowns. In addition, the general climate of anxiety and fear due to the high COVID-19 risk and the high level of mortality has influenced the perception and attitudes of people towards dental activity, inducing many dental patients to avoid appointments to the dentist if not highly urgent. We present an overview of the current state of knowledge about dental patients' perception, perspective, attitude, and expectations towards a full resumption of regular dental treatments.

Keywords: perception ; dental patient ; dental treatment ; safety ; COVID-19

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, dental professionals have been exposed to a high level of anxiety and stress due to several changes that have affected dentistry in many ways. To date, many international and national guidelines and recommendations are available to support dentists in their everyday dental activities ^{[1][2]}. In addition, many studies have investigated dentists' perceptions, problems, attitudes, and expectations worldwide to understand how dentists have faced the unprecedented situation due to the COVID-19 outbreak ^{[3][4][5]}.

The management of the emergencies and urgencies in public and private dental clinics during the various national lockdown, the handling of COVID-19 patients in need of urgent dental treatments, the optimization of the personal protective equipment (PPE), and the appropriate approach to resume the regular dental activity with a high level of safety for dental staff and patients have been deeply analyzed ^{[6][7][8][9][10]}.

In the first COVID-19 outbreak period, many countries adopted prudential measures to reduce the risk of contagion, such as suspending elective dental treatments and recommending executing only non-postponable dental treatments. However, after the first waves of COVID-19, the need to restart private and public dental activities has become the first and foremost goal of many dental professionals ^[11].

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