

Avoid “MEN” to Avoid 2019-nCoV Infection in Dental Practice.

Guest Editorial

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The new outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus termed ‘COVID-19’ has emerged as a serious global public health concern. The illness was first announced on 31 December 2019. The number of cases reported and documented from the declaration of the initial outbreak, to date, has grown exponentially [1].

Scientists believe that an animal source is ‘the most likely primary source’, and human-to-human transmission has occurred, with growing numbers of cases reportedly without exposure to animal markets via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how other respiratory pathogens spread [1]. The common transmission routes of novel coronavirus include direct transmission (cough, sneeze, and droplet inhalation transmission) and contact transmission (contact with oral, nasal, and eye mucous membranes) [2]. Hence the best possible measure to break the chain of spread is to avoid contact transmission via “MEN” i.e. Mouth, Eye and Nose by temporarily suspending elective dental procedures or use protective barriers in rendering emergency dental services.

Dental care settings invariably carry the risk of 2019-nCoV infection due to the specificity of its procedures, which involves face-to-face communication with patients, and frequent exposure to saliva, blood, and other body fluids, and the handling of sharp instruments [2]. In order to minimize the chance of exposures to 2019-nCoV; dentist and health professional need to follow the standard of contact and airborne precautions, personal protection including gloves, gowns, respiratory protection, eye protection, and hand hygiene [3].

Reinforcement for good hand hygiene is of the utmost importance. A two-before and-three-after hand hygiene guideline is proposed by the infection control department of the West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University, to reinforce the compliance of hand washing. Specifically, the oral professionals should wash their hands before patient examination, before dental procedures, after touching the patient, after touching the surroundings and equipment without disinfection, and after touching the oral mucosa, damaged skin or wound, blood, body fluid, secretion, and excreta. More caution should be taken for the dental professionals to avoid touching their own eyes, mouth, and nose[2].

A comprehensive program for the use of PPE should be enforced. Healthcare personnel should be medically cleared and trained in the use of PPE. All staff need to be fitted with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified N95 respirators [4].

According to the current status, blocking transmission, isolation, respiratory and eye protection, and hand hygiene are the urgent management strategies against 2019-nCoV[3]. These steps will ensure that health team will minimize contact transmission via “MEN” and will be beneficial in preventing cross contamination.

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