

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Pandemic: A Dilemma for Dental Health Care Professionals

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Sir,

The outbreak of Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) has affected humankind in the worst way imaginable. The rapid and unmanageable spread of disease has affected millions around the globe<sup>1</sup>. The mortality rate is on the rise despite active control measures and awareness campaigns amongst populations in hotspots. Several drugs, remedies and vaccine trials are ongoing in the research laboratories with a hope to confront the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. So far, the battle has been won by a few countries with strict post recovery measures to avoid re infection<sup>1</sup>.

In the light of current research, COVID-19 can be avoided and cured with self-immunity boost, adoption of preventive measures and symptomatic management of sufferers<sup>3</sup>. The first line of defense in this battle are health care workers deployed in the COVID-19 red zones who are working tirelessly to overcome the health perspective of this deadly pandemic. Similarly, amongst the frontline doctors and paramedics, dental care professionals are also in service and are among the most vulnerable to transmission of virus

from the host due to working in close contact with patients and involvement in continuous aerosol and microdroplet producing dental procedures<sup>4</sup>. Dental clinics, along with other potential risky fields, were closed in the beginning of the pandemic when it spread from mainland China to other geographical regions<sup>1</sup>.

In spite of potential hazards, dentists are performing emergency dental procedures and essential dental services to overcome the patient burden. The dentists are limiting transmission of SARS-CoV-2 mostly by preventive measures like regular thermal check, thorough history of patients, mouth rinses before and after procedures and judicious application of personal protective equipment with strict infection control procedures<sup>3</sup>. In spite of this, the dentists are not only at risk of getting infected but also could be transmitting infection to their family, colleagues, and patients. Moreover, their mental health levels are in stress and gradual anxiety<sup>2,4</sup>.

Under the current situation, it is natural to develop the fear of getting infected from patients in close contact. As a preventive measure, dental care professionals must either close down their practice, defer non-essential dental services or provide limited dental services according to the recommended local or American Dental Association Guidelines (ADA) and World Health Organization (WHO) for an indefinite period. This would be an appropriate step in curtailing the spread of COVID-19.

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