

Illegal Dental Practice: A Review

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Abstract

The requirement for oral health and aesthetics has increased rapidly worldwide. Large population in low and medium income countries, mainly in rural areas and those with lower socio-economic status, are completely lacking access to formal oral health care provided by either private providers or public services. In such settings the informal sector may offer services through a range of care providers that are not legally recognized, such inappropriate treatments puts patients at risk of irreversible damage to their oral and general health.

The aim of this article is to highlight patient protection issues, to give awareness on the hazards caused by illegal dental practice.

Keywords: Illegal dental practice, Dental public health, workforce planning, licensing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Any dental procedures done without proper educational qualification, licensing or registered by local or national legislation is called as Illegal dental practice.

It also includes concerns over the authenticity of dental equipment and materials available in the global market. They have only commercial approach with less focus on Professional ethics and patients' well-being.^{1,2,16}

2. WHAT CONSTITUTES ILLEGAL DENTAL PRACTICE?

- The widening gap between need and available oral care services.
- The high cost of available oral care services, making them unaffordable for populations
- Living on a low income.^{3,5}
- Unbearable pain forces poor patients to take services from illegal dentist.
- Less number of qualified dentist available in rural areas, as many dentist do not want to practice in rural areas.
- With an increasing liberalization of health markets resulting in weak public systems, availability of dental materials easily for illegal dentist.

- Lack of awareness among the patients to identify fake, illegal dentist.^{6,12}

3. COMPLICATIONS FROM TREATMENT OFFERED BY ILLEGAL DENTISTS

- Illegal dentist does not follow sterilization, disinfection protocol, as in the Guidelines on Infection Control in Dental Practice.⁷
- Incorrect dental procedures may contribute to health problems such as AIDS and hepatitis B, swelling and pus in the affected area due to infections.
- Permanent neurological defects – such as numbness and loss of feeling or sensation in the lower jaw, Injury to the jaw bone, teeth, lips and chin.
- Failure to recognize abnormal oral conditions example identification of oral cancer.
- Carryout dental treatment without local anesthesia causing severe trauma physically and emotionally to the patient, which can lead to decline of public trust in dental profession.
- They use Dental material which are low quality, where cytotoxicity test is not done. These materials causes severe allergy, carcinoma in long run.

- Illegal dentist do not have registered permanent clinics, they move from place to place to prevent being caught by the authorities, this affects the patients they cannot follow or contact them for any complaints or complications occurred.^{8,9,10}
- They do have any proper dental chair or equipment or light affect ergonomics of the patient.
- The sharp, unpolished edges in the denture or oral appliances may irritate the soft tissues in long run may lead to carcinoma.
- Providers operate outside regulatory system, patients will not have access to Remedies including reimbursement via insurance arrangements or sanctions from alicensure authority.
- They do not take any medical history of patients, drug allergy which affect the systemic health of patient.
- Suction disc, which provide high retention for dentures are not recommended anymore because of destructive effect, perforations and erosion in the palate due to negative pressure on palatal tissues.
- Usage of screw drivers and pliers for extraction can injure the surrounding areas of tooth and oral cavity. It Increases chances of bone fracture.
- Several quacks use extracted tooth for the replacement of missing tooth that causes foreign body reaction and infections.
- Majority of quacks practice restoration with self-curing acrylic that can injure dental pulp and predispose to various dental problems.
- Fixing the tooth and denture with wires by taking support of adjacent teeth can lead to loss of the teeth by producing uneven and abnormal forces.^{11,12,13,14}

4. ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL DENTAL PRACTICE

Role of Individual and Community:

Patients should take note of the following when choosing a dentist:

- Dental clinic must be registered with the dental council of the country, renewal should be done every year, and current year should be displayed.
- Patients should not hesitate in asking for certificates from a doctor, Patient must identify the legality of a practitioner's

qualification by checking whether they are registered by local or national legislation.

- Equipment should be disinfected and clean.
- Dental treatment charges should be reasonable and clear.
- Patients must avoid any dental treatment from provider who's pricing that appears to be cheaper compared to legal dentists, the treatment provided is substandard, patients may incur a higher cost of treatment for the complications done by illegal dentist.^{17,19,20}

Role of Dentist:

- A qualified dentists must buy genuine dental products and equipment's with licensed dental dealers only.
- Dentists and dental team members should be well-trained, follow professional ethics to serve the public.
- Qualified dentists should not promote dental quacks by visiting them and performing dental Procedures. It is thus the duty of every dental surgeon in the country to protect the Reputation of our prestigious profession.^{16,22,25,28}

Role of Authorities:

- Authorities must arrange inspection towards all dental clinics once in a year owned by a dental practitioner, in order to maintain their quality and services to patients.
- Minimum area required to set up clinic, ventilation, sterilization protocol, renewal of degree certificate, waste disposal must be checked regularly by the authorities
- There should be a centralized online public Grievance portal against illegal dentist.
- Unregistered dental dealers are able to sell fake dental equipment at a cheaper price to
- Fake dentists on e-commerce platforms. Therefore, authorities should make compulsory dental document verification, in order to control the supply of fake products, from unlicensed dealers to illegal dentist.^{30,31,35,39}

5. CONCLUSION

Joint effort between the government authorities, enforcement officers, dental professionals, registered dental dealers and the public is important in order to fight against Illegal dental practice. Social media help in public education

and awareness. Dental institutions must dedicate adequate time, and emphasize on awareness of dental students during their training. By effective teamwork, we will be able to stop the growth of Illegal dentistry.

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