

Letter to Editor

Dear Editor,

In December 2020, when a pneumonia outbreak with an uncertain etiology started in Wuhan, China, the world was unaware of the global crisis becoming shortly. The pathogen was identified from throat swab samples obtained by the Chinese Centre of Disease Control and Prevention on January 7, 2020 and named as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Later on, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease as COVID-19 (referred to CORona Virus Disease-2019). Most of the infected patients presented mild symptoms like fever, dry cough, sore throat, whereas some cases developed fatal complications such as severe pneumonia, pulmonary oedema and acute respiratory distress syndrome. The transmission routes of COVID-19 include direct transmissions such as sneeze, cough, and inhalation of droplets, and also contact transmission via contact with surfaces and then passed on with hands coming in contact with oral, eye, and nasal mucous membranes. COVID-19 can also be transmitted directly or indirectly by saliva, semen and by the fecal/oral route.

Considering the transmission routes and aerosol generating nature of most of the dental procedures, it is very clear that dentists are among the highest risk categories for transmission of the virus. Dental hospitals and practices carry high risk not only due to the fact typical treatment generates aerosols and airborne microorganisms can remain suspended in the air for an extended period, but also frequent and direct contact with blood, saliva and using of sharp instruments. In accordance with the instructions of Ministry of Health, dentists are providing treatment only for emergency cases. In this aspect, the role of dentists in the time of pandemic seems to be limited to prevention of spread, however, as a clinician and a researcher, I would like to emphasize other aspects of the issue. As dentists, we are very well-educated in order to prevent cross infection, however we cannot deny the growing body of evidence hour by hour regarding clinical symptoms, transmission routes and treatment protocols of Covid-19. It is our main responsibility to follow recent information and adapt our clinical practices. This adaptation consists not only prevention protocols but also possible modifications of the medication regimes prescribed in the treatment protocols, and, being able to evaluate the oral manifestations of the disease.

In spite of the fact that, with the great effort of many researchers from different parts of the world, the blurry image of Covid-19 gets clearer every single day, only limited numbers of manuscripts were published in dental journals. There is a need for research not only to set prevention protocols for dental settings, but also to enhance the knowledge of dentists about the oral manifestations of the infection. Although, peer review process can take time, our aim should be giving the priority to novel coronavirus related articles and provide recent and best data available for the readers.

As it is frequently said these days, we are all in this together...

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