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The dental office as a general health promotion center

A dental office is a place where we usually have the chance to meet many patients. Those patients are, in general, rather healthy from a general health perspective, and we have the opportunity to promote their health not only from the dental aspect but also from the medical one.

As time goes by, we see more and more evidence regarding the relationship between dental health and general health. Part of this relationship might be attributed to compliance with health-related behaviors and early detection, both in dentistry and in general health maintenance.

A dental office could become, with time and the right effort, a health promotion center where we reach out to our patients and improve the overall health status of our patient population. This could be achieved in several simple ways. First, there are some basic important and easy exams that can be performed (and sometimes are performed anyway) in a dental office setting, and could be a part of a routine that will lead to proper referral if necessary. Blood pressure measurement, BMI assessment, weight loss, and smoking cessation consultation are some examples for simple health promotion that could easily be available in dental offices and might improve the general health of the population around us.

Another way to contribute to general health is by providing vaccination services at the office. In this way

we can promote vaccination and give our patients the option of getting their shots at our office without having to commute further.

Furthermore, identifying risk factors for common chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases could also be achieved at the dental office using structural questionnaires or interviews, some of which are already done during the first visit at the clinic.

Becoming more involved in our patients' overall health and wellness might improve the connection and bond between patients, their families, the community, and the dental practice. This will improve our rapport with our patients and might also help in recruiting new ones.

Of course, this change should be supported and encouraged by the health insurance companies and the health services since it will provide better preventive measures and early detection mechanisms for the overall population, and hopefully help in reducing morbidity and health-related financial burden over time. Dental offices should be stimulated to and properly compensated for providing those services. It should be a combined effort of healthcare services together with the dental community to serve our patients' population better and to promote a healthier world.

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