

Holistic Dentistry: “Your Body Hears What Your Mind Says”

Samhita Kaka , Shweta S Hugar, Sanjana Soneta, Madhura Mundada, Shivayogi M Hugar* and Niraj S Gokhale

Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry, KAHER'S KLE VK Institute of Dental Sciences, Belagavi, India.

***Corresponding Author:** Shivayogi M Hugar, Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry, KAHER'S KLE VK Institute of Dental Science, Belagavi, India. **E-mail:** dr.hugarsm@gmail.com

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Abstract

Holistic dentistry also referred to as biocompatible dentistry is an ancient approach to the current conventional dentistry. The line of approach is to foster health and wellness of body as a whole rather than merely treating the disease. Modern dentistry deals only with the particular symptom of a disease but holistic dentistry comprehends and deals with mind body and spirit of the patient and not just his/her “teeth”. It concentrates on usage of non-toxic restorative materials and incorporates techniques like acupuncture, neural therapy and aromatherapy as well. Although this is an ancient concept, awareness and practice is barely minimum. Therefore, the dentists around the world are in dilemma. The objective of this paper is to illuminate the light on this topic so a better understanding and awareness can be spread amongst the dentists regarding it.

Keywords: Biologic Dentistry; Healing Dentistry; Oral Health

Introduction

Almost always a dental appointment is assumed to be traumatic and distressing with barely any correspondence between oral and overall health [1].

According to the WHO, health is a state of complete physical mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Therefore, it is very important to maintain a harmony between our mind body and soul and thus the new era is here ‘holistic dentistry’.

Holism is derived from the Greek word holos which means whole or entire. Hence, holistic dentistry gives prominence to oral health in correlation to an individual's entire physical as well as emotional and spiritual health [2].

Holistic dentistry is also known as Alternative dentistry (alternative techniques like acupuncture, naturopathy, homeopathy are incorporated), Biocompatible dentistry (the materials used are biocompatible), Unconventional dentistry (deflect conventional

treatment, take up methods gleaned from other complementary approaches and eliminate a few traditional methods), Biological dentistry (state of physical and emotional health of an individual is considered) [2].

As rightly said by Dr. Ron Ehrlich, the same blood that flows through an infected gum or tooth also flows through the rest of the body, therefore a diseased mouth is a diseased body. It is a proven piece of evidence about how a bad mouth can lead to a broad range of systemic diseases including infective endocarditis, diabetes, renal problems and a lot more. When leaves of a tree are turning brown we don't paint them green, do we? We try to recognize the cause of the problem. Holistically practicing dentist would look at the fundamental cause of the problem rather than just treating the symptom [1].

Holistic dentistry amalgamates dental cognizance with various allopathic fields to enhance a person's oral health. It is a whole body approach i.e. it is not just confined to a particular region of a person's body but considers an individual's overall health and

treatment is individualized. A dentist treating patient holistically would adhere to a preventive approach, to be precise they uncover preventive solutions to problems that may influence various parts of the body [3,4].

A holistic dentist treats the person and not just the tooth. Therefore, in future a visit to dentist would assuage more than just a toothache [1].

History

The history dates back to 1800, when the National Dental Association agnized detrimental effects of amalgam restoration and restrained association members to use it on their respective patients. The other countries have forbidden the use of mercury thereafter [2,3].

Between 1870 to 1948, Holistic dental medicine further ascended with Weston A Price, a pioneer who advocated holistic dentistry. Price put forward his concept, popularly known as "focal infection theory". One of the Price's students, Melvin page, coined the phrase 'balancing body chemistry' and believed that tooth decay is an outstanding example of systemic chemical imbalances [2,4].

In 1978, Holistic Dental Association was founded to develop and promote alternative treatment methods which are not practiced traditionally by the dental practitioners and enlightening the public regarding the virtues of holistic dental practice for their own health and wellbeing. International Association of Oral medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT) in 1984 was founded to notify the public about potentially toxic-materials in the mouth predominantly mercury and fluoride. In 1985, The American Academy of Biological Dentistry (IABD) was formed and later renamed as International Academy of Biological Dentistry and Medicine (IABDM) in 2005. Its mission states that: The IABDM supports dentist's, physicians and allied practitioners committed to integrating body, mind, spirit and mouth and caring for the whole person.

Principles of holistic dentistry

Holistic dentistry follows certain principles [2,3]:

1. Proper nutrition in order to avoid and reverse degenerative dental disorders.
2. Avoidance and exclusion of toxins from dental materials.

3. To prevent and treat dental malocclusion.
4. To prevent and treat gum disease at its biological basis.

Procedure

Holistic dental care includes a mixture of techniques which might vary as per the dentist and the patient needs. Initially, a detailed history, examination of the patient and radiographs are taken. X rays are taken by the most recent machinery which uses films that offer 50% less radiation than standard systems. In the next visit, referred to as "Review of Findings" the dental practitioner educates the patient regarding the condition of their mouth and the positive treatment choices [4].

Holistic dental practice incorporates Ayurveda, Hypnosis, Homeopathy, Aromatherapy, Nutrition. Neural therapy, hematology, immunology and electroacupuncture may also be integrated [2].

Ayurveda in dentistry

Ayurveda is one among the few ancient systems of medicine, which has emerged in India centuries ago. However, at present it is practiced in other parts of the world as an alternative medicine. Ayurveda has a rich repository of resources for dentistry. Avariety of medicinal plants in ayurveda can be used as an adjunct for oral health care which are proved to be safe, non-toxic and efficient through ages [5].

Herbs can be used as storage media for avulsed tooth, mouth rinses, root canal irrigants and as tooth whiteners. Commonly used herbs in dentistry include gooseberry, clove oil, lemon tea, tree oil, aloe vera, neem, basil and turmeric. These herbs are formulated to produce toothpastes, tooth powders and mouthwashes to prevent various dental problems like bleeding gums, tooth pain, oral malodour, etc [3,5].

In 2011 Anirban Chatterjee, *et al*, evaluated the anti-gingivitis and anti-plaque effect of *Azadirachta indica* (neem) mouth rinse on plaque induced gingivitis and showed that it is as effective in reducing periodontal indices as chlorhexidine [5].

Withania somnifera is used in management of patients with dental anxiety. Aloe vera is used in management of oral lichen planus. Babul is used for management of gum diseases due to anti-bacterial activity against *P. gingivalis* and *P. intermedia*. Clove oil

consists of eugenol compound and is rich in minerals and vitamins (vitamin A and C) which acts as most powerful antiseptic, analgesic and antimicrobial. It is used for the management of gum diseases and mouth ulcers. Turmeric suppresses metastasis of melanoma cells and deactivates the tobacco containing carcinogens. Tulsi leaves act as antibacterial and prevents dental plaque gingivitis and bad breath [6].

Nutrition in dentistry

Diet plays a significant etiological role in dental diseases like dental caries, dental erosion and periodontal disease. Deficiencies of Vitamin A and D and protein energy malnutrition have been associated with enamel hypoplasia. Malnutrition invariably impairs innate and adaptive defenses of the host and thence can amplify the severity of oral infections which may in addition lead to life-threatening diseases. Deficiency of vitamin C will result in scurvy-related periodontitis. A balanced and nutritious diet is therefore a paramount importance for a good oral and overall health [7].

Aromatherapy in dentistry

Odours have the ability to alter the emotional state of an individual because the essential oils possess pharmacological properties that are liable for emotional effects. The essential oils activate the olfactory nerve cells in upper nasal cavity when inhaled and further send impulses to the limbic system of the brain which gives rise to immediate response to the fragrance by stimulating circulatory and nervous system. Aromatherapy helps to put people in a relaxed and calm mood before any dental procedure. Oils like lavender, bergamot, sandalwood and basil are often used [4,8].

Homeopathy in dentistry

Homeopathy is the second largest system of medicine in today's world recognized by the World Health Organization. It is useful in management of conditions affecting orofacial structures. Belladonna, used for toothache, early dental abscess and also in cases of dry socket. Aconite foxglove is used for trigeminal neuralgia. Borax can be used in cases of aphthous ulcers, candidiasis and oral lichen planus. Arsenicum album is used in cases of bleeding gums and for diseases involving pulp and periapical region. It has also been proved that many homeopathic remedies are effectual for a wide range of dental conditions with no side-effects [2,9].

Hypnosis in dentistry

Hypnodontia is the usage of hypnosis in dental practice. It has therapeutic as well as operative uses. Therapeutically it includes dental phobia and anxiety, extensive gag reflex, trigeminal neuralgia, pain, adaptation to dentures, behavior modification such as thumb sucking or bruxism and as an adjunct to inhalation sedation. Operative uses comprise analgesia control

of salivary flow and faster postoperative recovery. Hypnosis in simultaneity with pharmaceutical sedation enhances patient safety by minimizing the cardiovascular effects of dental treatment and required dose of sedative drugs. Hypnosis is seldom used yet powerful tool in patient management. With appropriate training and proper patient selection it can enhance a professionals practice and clinical skill [10].

Components of Holistic Dentistry:

There are six components of holistic dentistry

1. **Biocompatibility:** Materials used should not have toxic or harmful effects on biological systems. Biocompatibility can be tested with the help of blood or energy testing.
2. **Bioesthetics:** It deals with synchronism between visual attractiveness and dental function.
3. **Biochemical balance:** It deals with saliva's buffered pH balance together with bacterial balance to promote healthy oral tissues.
4. **Biomechanics:** Deals with occlusal force resulting from biting teeth or grinding teeth. These activities interfere with sleep and can cause breakdown in tissue integrity.
5. **Bioenergetics:** A system of physical and psychological therapy that is held to increase well-being by releasing blocked physical and psychic energy.
6. **Bioethics:** Treating patients with honesty and due care [2].

Traditional dentist vs Holistic dentist:

A holistic dentist [11]:

- Uses safe and comparatively non-toxic dental materials.
- Is an independent thinker and does not disregard sound and progressive dental education research or procedural training for the reason that it was not taught in dental school.
- Advanced holistic dentists acknowledge the hazards of drug therapy and the true reason for the need of dental services principally is malnutrition and toxicity of teeth, gums and jaws.

Treatment of root canals

Infection in the tooth undergoing the root canal treatment cannot be seen without magnification. If this infection is not completely removed and filled, there are chances of infection walling to the canals which might further permeate though the substance filled and spread throughout the body. A holistic dentist uses two high strength magnifying glasses attached to a head band during the procedure yet the dentist sometimes might still not be able to see all of the infection to remove it, so laser is the best tool to extirpate

all the infection [11].

Implant dangers

The titanium prosthesis or rods in implants short-circuits the electrical frequencies of the nervous system and can interfere with brain body communication. A holistic dentist uses metal-free implants. Zirconia is a substitute to conventional titanium based implant systems with better biological aesthetics, mechanical and optical properties [11,12].

Tooth decay [1,13]:

Biocompatible materials are used for the restoration of caries. CERC is a ceramic material used instead of amalgam. Holistically treating dentist doesn't just restore a decayed tooth but understands that it is the result of metabolic imbalance and improper diet. Therefore, refers the patient to a dietician or a nutritionist.

Benefits of holistic dentistry

Holistic dentistry is aesthetic, comparatively innocuous and biocompatible approach of treatment. It is an integrated approach which works in conjunction with other health care sectors like homeopathy, aromatherapy and hypnosis. Holistic dentist believes in curing the fundamental cause of the problem than just a mere symptom [2,4].

Conclusion

Holistic dentistry is an age old alternate approach yet an emerging field of dental medicine that takes into consideration both oral and general health of an individual. The ideology of holistic dentistry is to do no harm and the dentist must look at the mouth, teeth, gums and jaws as the integral part of larger body systems. A holistically treated patient is therefore known to have not just quality teeth but a quality life.

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