

## ATYCHIPHOBIA AMONGST DENTISTS IN INDIA: PRESENT SCENARIO

Divya Vinayachandran<sup>1</sup>, Saravanakarthykeyan Balasubramanian<sup>2</sup>

1.Senior lecturer, Oral Medicine and Radiology, SRM Kattankulathur Dental College and Hospitals, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

2. Reader, Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, SRM Dental College, Ramapuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

### ABSTRACT:

This brief commentary highlights today's state of dentistry in India, part of the country that has capable dentists, deprived of opportunities and struggle to keep up with the race for survival and another portion of the society ie. patients who lack the basic facilities for better oral health care. This is an unique article pertaining to the public dental health status in India and will be an eye opener for future young dentists to concentrate on the disparities in lack of health services to the people who are out of reach, thereby might act as a seed to solve the dual problems, as stated above.

**Key words:** Atychiphobia, Dentists, India, Oral Health Awareness, Unemployment



Although, it is often easy to understand a picture with only shades of either black or white, it is often the grey undertones that add more meaning or beauty to it. A complete picture comprises of, not only the very developed and underdeveloped aspects of our world, but also an "in between" genre, who struggle to help themselves but are often overlooked. Ironically, so is the state of dentistry in India, part of the country that has capable dentists, deprived of opportunities and struggle to keep up with the race for survival and another portion of society who lack the basic facilities for better oral health care.

Early in 2016 the Times of India, reported that the dentist to people ratio in 2004 in India, in the urban areas was 1:10,000 and 1:2,50,000 in the rural areas.<sup>[1]</sup> In 2020, it is estimated that there

will be an excess of more than 1,00,000 dentists. Gone are the days when the dental graduate is looked up to with awe and with equal regard as a graduate of medicine. It is seen that there is a surplus of dentists in the urban areas and ironically, in contrast to this, there are rural areas suffering from lack of oral health awareness or facilities. The field of dentistry develops by leaps and bounds, which is witnessed in several parts of the world, yet there are areas which are deprived of basic oral healthcare facilities. Although, there are several studies conducted reporting the attitude and knowledge of the people with regards to oral health, in our country, India, the lack of awareness and ignorance of the importance of oral well being for the general well being of an individual, persists.<sup>[2]</sup> This is especially seen among the rural population in our country which

comprises of more than 70% of our population. Additionally, people exhibit a careless attitude towards oral health in contrast to the attention given to general health.

This has lead to several problems faced by dentists in India, ranging from unemployment most commonly, depression due to fear of failure (atychiphobia) and several reports of suicides in extreme cases.<sup>[3,4]</sup> According to a recent study by the World Health Organization, depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy US\$ 1 trillion each year in lost productivity.<sup>[5]</sup> Unemployment is a well-recognized risk factor for mental health problems, while returning to, or getting work is protective.

Yet again, there is a steep increase in the number of dental schools in India (more than 300+), which, although understandably contributes to improving the oral health but is pointless, when eventually leading to more unemployed dentists. Lack of awareness on oral health in rural areas, eventually leads to inability to successfully run private practices in these areas. This has lead to saturation in urban areas leading to, with the exception

of a few, again a majority of unsuccessful private practices. The current situation of dentists in India is creating a lot of apprehension amongst students currently pursuing dentistry as well as the fresh graduates. There are reports on the difficulties endured by dental graduates in India, but prompt action, which is the need of the hour, does not seem to be taken.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

An increase in job opportunities for dentists, in our Government sector with benefits should be created. Attention to the difficulties faced by dentists, an increase in the unemployment and depression should be addressed. Adequate steps should be taken from the undergraduate level. Early guidance through professional development programs may help students in identifying and standardizing their objectives to benefit the underdeveloped part of our society and simultaneously carve a satisfactory and successful niche for themselves as graduates. It calls for more awareness creating/development programs to enrol professionals, who have the will and the skill but lack sufficient opportunities or encouragement to cater to the needs of patients.

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