

## **DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH IN PAKISTAN AND SUGGESTIONS FOR INTEGRATION**

By Prof. Dr. M. A. Soofi

Dental Public Health, is a branch of community medicine based upon collective efforts, to check the disease from the community and to adopt measures for prevention, treatment and education including the research activities, because the preventive measures have been assessed for their efficacy and simplicity in their implementation both by the individual and community as a whole.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH**

The development of dental public health in Pakistan has linked with the local indigenous treatment and services established long ago pre partition. In undivided India, de'Montmorency College of Dentistry, Lahore was established in 1934. This Institution, since then holds premier position in providing the undergraduate dental education and treatment in its attached hospital to the public. Dental schools were available in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi for producing the licentiate dentists for the treatment – Mardar-e-Millat Mohtarma Miss Fatima Jinnah was also the recipient of the license in dentistry from Calcutta Dental School prior to partition. In 1947 Marshal Day, the then Principal of the Dentistry College, Lahore gave attention to the school children for purposes of healthy dentition and thus he made a survey of Diyal Singh High School and Queen Merry School. In this way concern over the ill-dental health of the school children was emerged and concept of dental health education started.

After the partition of sub-continent and establishment of independent state for Muslims of sub-continent by Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, creator of Pakistan, dental education increased to the size of four existing institutions for undergraduate dental education in Pakistan (1) Liaquat Medical College, Jamshoro Hyderabad (2) Nishtar Medical College, Multan and (3) Khyber Medical College, Peshawar.

The education increased for curriculum but the preventive concepts and goals remain to be adopted. The Health Department at Central and Provincial Governments level created curative clinics of dentistry in almost all district headquarters of Pakistan and bigger Tehsils have also been provided with dental clinics with more facilities of treatment and less of the community work. The dental care for the children and mass prevention, education and administration in community dentistry are still to be developed.

### **PROBLEMS OF DENTISTRY IN PAKISTAN**

The dentistry in Pakistan is getting popularity among the masses and changes are expected by them. But the labouring potentials of dentists in Pakistan are being derived by (1) many less job vacancies (2) high cost of instrument for private practice and (3) less prosperity in private practice in prevailing growing economic stress because the unqualified practice is extended to each corner of the country.

The gloomy picture of this profession is also due to lack of future provision of dental education and research and it is neglected relatively by the medical administration. There is no reciprocal relationships between the teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate research. The dentists having qualified many years back are starving for higher education. There is no chance for the dental graduates to increase their knowledge and status and thus many of them migrate to the different countries of the world and are obliged to settle down abroad for their prosperity and enterprise of their magnitude of research for proper promotion and object of their project, settle down in practice and there they are properly encouraged by the host governments.

It is interesting to note that on one side dentists are serving the medical science Anesthesia and are considered as a complete component of the medical team, but for their promotion in status and knowledge they cannot wear the garments of postgraduate study diploma in Anesthesia (DA) because basically they are dental graduate and not medical graduate. What a tragedy? According to the local proverb "Small crew is justified but the big crew is unjustified to be slaughtered for eating". Dentist is accepted as

Anesthesiast but not accepted as post graduate anesthesiast student. Similarly, an unfortunate dentist, who by his virtue of hardwork, labour, interest, devotion in the field of medical pathology obtained research degree of Master of Philosophy in Pathology (M.Phil), perhaps in 1968. Since then the step-son of the medicine having the postgraduate research degree has not been given the right to apply as Assistant Professor in Pathology because basically he is a dental graduate and not a medical graduate. On other side of Dentistry his postgraduate degree is not being considered as postgraduate work is not in Dentistry and he (M. Phil) is constantly acting as Demonstrator in Nishtar Medical College, Multan. So the dentistry in Pakistan is a profession of gloom and concern. I, therefore urge that this discrimination and step motherly treatment may be stopped with for inducing better environment of the professional knowledge and economic growth in the country. The dentists should be provided with chance of enterprising if he is capable, why he should not be given the administration of whole medical system. We have seen in the past the chair of enterprise of Secretary Health was captured by Gynecologist, Blood Specialist, Physician and General Surgeon and why it should be captured not by a dentists. If he is creative, and possesses the sense of commitment and responsibility. Most of the dentists are dynamics and they are sensitive about the institution and they also possess the idea of their career and if they are considered as specialists, their chances of promotion may be fixed at par with the medical graduates.

### **Suggestion for Integration**

Why dentists are not considered at par with the other medical graduates, some say the course of dental graduates is of years and that of medical graduate is of five years, though both the graduates appear at the University for 4 professional examinations, both graduates are given admission in their respective institutions after F. Sc. Per medical. The distance of one year is actual point of conflict. Let this education be integrated in the following form:

- a. Curriculum of Dentistry may be increased to five years in addition to one year basic subjects of Anatomy and Physiology may be added in addition to Community Dentistry. In this way the dental graduate shall have the equal basic knowledge about the basic subject and this shall decrease his problem, hardships and obstacles to achieve his rights and he shall be better educated than. It shall decrease the heart-burning to their counterpart and in this way he shall be able to achieve easily degree of B. Sc. After the first professional examination like medical graduate.
- b. All graduates candidates willing for adopting the career as a dentist should be admitted in the medical colleges in the same way and after fourth year specialized training of dentistry may be added an extra one year after medical graduation may be kept for their specialization as a periodontist, public health dentist, conservationist, orthodontist, oral physician and oral surgeon etc. This pattern of education already carried out in many of the countries of the world like Scandinavia, USSR, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the separate dental education is adopted in U. K. And USA but the education is integrated and is being given by the medical schools in hospitals. If this is adopted then (a) each medical college established in Pakistan should have a chair of specialist of dentistry/public dentistry of the medicine and dentistry, and (b) Medical graduates should be selected for higher training abroad for specializing in the field of Facio-Maxillary and other oral Surgery. So this way the medical schools should be part of medicine and dentistry and the chair of dentistry may be labeled as Dean or Head etc. This is the way how the continuing education in dentistry shall be achieved.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions for the Development and Improvement of Dentistry**

- a. There is need of promulgation of Legislation and Dental Act to save the population from the crude and unscientific treatment; to safeguard interest of the qualified dentists for their jobs and for their private practice

investment. In this way we shall set up an example of development in dentistry according to the tradition of the WHO elsewhere, and the Government should ban the unqualified practice at par with other countries of the world.

- b. For continuing postgraduate dental education and professional standing and adopting specialization in this branch of medicine and in order to preserve and to improve the standard of practice and education, there must be provision of regular and frequent opportunities to the dentists throughout his working life because to maintain the knowledge and skills and new advances, there is need of suitable supervisors who possess the suitable values and are in a possession of opportunities to be provided to the trainee students. The teachers must have their contribution in profession in the recognized journals and his accumulative knowledge he has got the flexibility to part with the consequences of such talents shall bring bright future for the nation and the dentistry.
- c. Dental surgeons should be given equal opportunities and facilities which shall be provided to the Medical officers in the forthcoming Health Policy.
- d. Dental Surgeons should be treated at par with the Medical Officers while considering career structure, pay scales, promotion, etc.
- e. The Dental faculty should be created at the Central and Provincial level and senior dental surgeons should be appointed for the administration of the dental services of dental surgeons in the Provinces and Centre.
- f. Dental Health Education and School Health Services may be included in that list and the post of the Dental Hygienists (candidates from College of Community Medicine) should be created at each dental clinic to help the patients.

In order to fill up the dearth of the teachers in dentistry, the Associate Professors having diploma from the foreign universities in thier specific subject should be upgraded by giving relaxation at par with themedical diplomats who have been promoted to help the profession. I may add here that the Community Medicine has been given relaxation for upgrading the post of professors, which is also component of Public Health Dentistry.