

DENTAL EDUCATION

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Infant oral mutilation (IOM) a world dental concern

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Infant Oral Mutilation (IOM) is a primitive practice widely accepted and adored among many communities in Africa, though not widely talked about. Young children presenting with diarrhea and fever are subjected to the extraction of deciduous tooth buds, most commonly canines, (these they say are disease causing worms) as an accepted remedy for their illness. When tooth buds are extracted they exhibit a milky appearance and the village healer shows the parents so that they can see and feel the worms supposedly causing the child's illness. Traditional healers and birth attendants (TBAs) perform the practice. It is a belief that whenever a bone is broken or blood is shed, payment must be made to the TBA to ensure that recovery is quick and not followed by a "bloodshed curse". Instruments used for these procedures include penknives, metal blades made from spoon handles or bike tire spokes, and sharp fingernails. The instruments used are often not sterilized, and no topical anesthesia is used. The practice is responsible for new HIV and other infections and also missing or crooked permanent teeth. As the president of Kinga Africa, I wish to do an oral presentation on this topic and the role of dental education in alleviating this practice. It will be great sharing the achievements and successes the action against IOM, program has achieved. The world must be aware of this and it must stop.

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