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Improving the quality of care in a patient-centered dental practice

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Assuring a high standard in the quality of care delivered is an important goal for every practitioner. Quality Assurance (QA) is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of various aspects of care. Implementation of a suitable QA program involves developing criteria based on acceptable standards of care and professional ethics. Analyzing such criteria to determine weaknesses helps achieve Quality Improvement (QI). QI in health care refers to revising current standards of care to make changes that are confluent with improved patient outcomes and system effectiveness.

There are several strategies to ensure QI in a dental clinic. Use of various checklists, encouraging certification, obtaining accreditation and ensuring proper credentialing of employed professionals are the most common ones. For many years, policy makers and regulators in the United States have pushed toward mandatory accreditation for hospitals and allied health schools. Dental personnel would benefit from being aware that office procedures may soon come under such a radar. It is in this respect, that accreditation as a Dental Home for a general dental practice has received considerable attention.

The Dental Home is an ongoing relationship between the dentist and the patient, based on oral health care delivered in a comprehensive, continuously accessible, coordinated and family-centered way. This synoptic review will discuss the feasibility of accreditation as a Dental Home by enumerating its requirements, benefits, limitations and recommendations, thus jointly addressing the current trend towards accreditation of facilities and marked interest in the concept of Dental Homes.

Biography

Dr. Sampada Jayant Deshpande completed her BDS at the age of 23 years from Manipal University, India and a subsequent Fellowship in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery from University of California, San Francisco, USA. She has published papers in the fields of Public Health Dentistry, Basic Science and Pathology in her short career. She currently serves as the executive board member of Oral Cancer Organization.

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