Awareness of Forensic Odontology Among Dental Graduates in India

It gives me immense pleasure to write editorial for the Journal of Indo-Pacific Academy of Forensic Odontology and would like to thanks editor in chief Dr. Pradhuman Verma for giving me this opportunity.

Dental identification has been a vital tool for identifying deceased individuals since 66 AD.[1]
It has received international praise as a field that empowers people to use science in judicial procedures. Currently, a lack of trained professionals, a lack of training facilities, and a lack of exposure to the subject during undergraduate years are the biggest road blocks to expanding the application of forensic odontology for the benefit of society. Despite the fact that the Indian Dental Association recommends that an individual's dental records (radiographs, models, photographs, and clinical correspondence) be securely kept for at least 5-6 years, the practices has yet to be implemented in all dental fields across India.[2]

Identification of human remains through dental records and assisting at the scene of criminal activity; bite marks or physical injuries in cases of suspected child or adult abuse; age and gender determination; and testifying as an expert in a court of law are some of the important applications of forensic odontology.

With post-mortem modifications, such as acute injury, cause the body to be mutilated to such an extent that fingerprints cannot be captured, dental identification plays an important role in the identification of human remains. In the cases of man-made catastrophes and natural calamities, dental records serve as an important tool for identifying individuals whose remains have been mangled beyond recognition.[3]

Radiographs, dental casts, dental pictures, cheiloscopy, bite mark analysis, tooth prints, and dental DNA analysis are some of the techniques used in forensic dentistry. The dental record comprises both subjective and objective information on the patient, as well as legal documents. Physical examination of the dentition and supporting oral and surrounding structures must be recorded. Pediatric dental patients' records should be retained until the patient reaches the age of maturity.[4]

Forensic dentistry plays an important role in the identification of victims following mass disasters. In developing countries such as India, forensic dentistry is not developed up to the mark. Unawareness is one of the major reasons for this situation. Maintenance of dental records is still not proper enough, and services of forensic dentists are not being utilized.

Our biggest concern is to whether the dental practitioner should know about forensic odontology, the reason being that dental identification provides an accurate source of identification of the victim or the suspect. Unfortunately, in India, experience among the dentists regarding forensic sciences is still insufficient.

This may be due to lack of proper awareness; neither the government nor the people have completely understood the role that can be played by the forensic dentist in settling the disputes and identification of individuals.

Hence I would like to state that in my opinion, Dental Council of India should incorporate forensic odontology as a separate subject and a specialization programme in MDS curriculum.

Thus to conclude there is a need to create an awareness among the dental professionals regarding the different forensic identification methods and collection of data.

Henceforth, knowledge, awareness, practice and career preferences in the field of forensic odontology is the area of concern for dental graduates.

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