Dental Care and Underage Populations

As health care providers, dentist and dental hygienists should be more compromise with the public. In my opinion, anyone who is in school to be a healthcare provider, should not do it for the money, but because they care about the public. As health care providers we should be compromise to help people, not to take advantage of them. I want to mention three important point on this essay, the status of dental health care in the U.S., the dental situation of a lot of children and what I would do as a hygienist to change the situation.

First, the status of dental health care in the U.S. is really bad. I was not aware that the dental care situation on this country was so bad. By watching the documentary I realize, that a big percentage of the U.S population does not receive dental care. Medicaid does not cover a lot when it comes to dental care, and a most people do not have money to pay for dental service out of pocket. Dentistry is a business after all, and most dentist do not want to work with Medicaid, because their reimbursement rates are too low. In my opinion, is really sad seen how a lot of children on Medicaid, do not have the opportunity to go to the dentist, because of accessibility. Not a lot of dentist are accepting Medicaid, so there is a large demand for dentist and hygienist especially in rural areas. There are a lot of children who need dental services, and not enough dental personal to provide those services.

The problem is not only the dental health care in the U.S, but also the dental services that kids are been provided. A lot of children are in a bad dental situation because they are not enough dentist, to provides the services that the population is requiring. According to Catherine H. Bersell, “The national average of practicing dentists who accept Medicaid is 20%.” Only 20% of dentist in the U.S. accept Medicaid, and according to the Frontline video, “half of all children in this country, relied on Medicaid or state insurance.” The situation is bad, we have a national crisis in dentistry. According to Bersell, “Dental caries, the most common chronic disease of childhood, affects 60% of children ages 5 to 12 and 25% of children under the age of 5 experience Early Childhood Caries (EEC). A higher prevalence of dental caries is associates with children living in poverty.” Our children are not receiving the care that they are supposed to be receiving. It is not surprising that dental caries is associates with poverty. A lot of people in the U.S live check to check, they have bills to pay, and putting food into their children plates comes before going to the dentist. Dentist are expensive, a lot of people in America cannot afford to pay for the dentist for theirs kids. And Medicaid is not really a solution, because only a 20% of dentist accept Medicaid, and 50% of children in this country are on Medicaid, so big part of the population do not get the access to it. As a result for dentistry demand, corporate dental chains are starting to show up, especially in underserve areas. The video mention a dental chain name Kool Smiles. “Kool Smiles” is a dental chain , that accept Medicaid, they work in underserve populations and provide the service that they public need. However, they problem with Kool Smiles is that the company is more interested in getting money out of the insurance, than in the service that they are providing to kids. Kool Smiles, was putting crowns, on children instead of dental fillings because of the reimbursement. According to the Frontline video “The reimbursement for crowns is 50% more than filings.” They were, forcing the crowns into the children mouth, they were not putting them right, it was about the money, instead of what the patient need it. They were doing a horrible job, on innocents kids, just because of the profits. Now, I do not understand, how a health care provider, someone that is supposed to be compromise to help the public, just take advantage of children. Children are innocent, they cannot defend, themselves, and it is unacceptable for a dentist to be providing that kind of service.

Besides mentioning the situation that a lot of children are undergoing in America with dental insurance and the service that is been provided to them, I will like to give some solutions that will help with this problems. As health care providers, we should be compromise to help the public. We should be compromise to help the poor. I know that the dental situation in America, is good compare to other countries, however it could be better. Before giving some solutions to the dental problems, in the U.S, I will like to briefly talk about dental situation in Dominican republic. I am from the Dominican Republic and a lot of people in my country suffer, or has suffer from dental caries, because most people do not go to the dentist unless they are in pain. They are two main causes for this reason, the lack resources and the lack of education. Both here and in the Dominican Republic, as a hygienist what we can do is educate the public. A lot of people do not know the consequences of not taking care of their teeth. And they do not know how to properly take care of their teeth. I think that the dental team, should give back to the public. I understand that is expensive for dentist to finish their carrier, and by the time they graduated they are in debt. However the whole reason, why we are become healthcare providers is to help the public, so we should find a way to help. Dentist should at least part time, work with an organization that help the underserve population in the U.S. Hygienist in the other hand, have to educate, if we educate the public, in prevention, we could make a difference. We have to educate our friends, educate our families, volunteer to go to schools, and educate kids. We should make campaigns, go to underserve areas, and educate the public on who to properly take care of their teeth. Together dentist, hygienist and assistants, we should all volunteer to provide service to people who really need it. We have to find a balance between making money to pay debts, and giving back to the public, we have to help the underserve population. When I graduate, I will like to work for a non-profit organization at least as a part time. I want to serve people, who really needs the service and do not have another way to get it. I will love to work with children, they are the future and if you educate children properly, they can make a difference.

In addition, to what I mention, I want to say that they discussion that I had with my peers in class was really inspiring, we all think that it is totally unfair for dental chains to be taking advantage of vulnerable people. We understand that a lot of dentist need money, and desperate situation lead you to extreme measure. However, taking advantage of people is not the solution. We should serve people, not take advantage of them.

In conclusion, as I said in the beginning, as healthcare providers we should be compromise to help people, not to take advantage of them. This project was a learning experience, it reinforce my opinion on humanity. I think that we could be really selfish sometime, we should be more altruistic, and stop thinking some much about ourselves. There are a lot of children, and adults needing our help, and as healthcare providers we should find a way to help. Lest take action, and find a solution together because the status of the dental health care in the U.S is horrible, children deserve to be on a better dental situation, and as hygienist we could improve that situation as part of a dental team, if we work together.

Reference:

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