Dental Assistant And Safety

A great deal of innovative technology has been integrated into the modern dental office during the last several decades. However, no product can increase productivity and reduce stress and strain on the dental team as much as using the singular concept of four-handed dentistry. The research of the 1950s is unchallenged in its impact on productivity. Combined with the practice of ergonomics in the workplace, this concept must be revisited by the dental profession. The young dentists of the 21st century have had minimal exposure to true four-handed dentistry. [5]

In our days, the dental assistant fulfills a dual function: secretarial and dental office management plus the technical and material assistance during interventions. Their presence is paramount insofar as they help reduce the dentist mental and physical workload therefore providing a more appropriate work environment with minimal stress and disorder.

The assistant autonomously performs many tasks:
- Reception of the patient upon arrival at the office.
- Chair assistance: preparation of filling and impression materials, preparation of instruments for the dentist. She also realizes the x-rays, which she then archives correctly.
- Maintenance of instruments and devices: cleaning, disinfection, sterilization.
- Administration of the firm: establishment fees invoices, accounting of the patient payment, keeping the agenda of appointments, the control and management of stocks including the orders, convocation of the patients for the controls, telephone reception, correspondence, etc. Due to these reasons, we cannot give up the assistants help for better working condition and self-mental and physical-care.

Last but not least, hygiene and safety in the workplace are not to be disregarded. Dental surgeons and dental assistants are exposed many kinds of risks: chemical, infectious, physical and radiological ones related to the dental care they provide to their patients. They handle irritating and allergenic agents, disinfection of instruments; they often have arduous postures during the care or the preparation of the products or the cleaning of work plans, they undergo accidents with exposure to the blood or to the liquids and biological particles due to injuries with the instruments, by ocular projections or by inhalation and in addition they can be exposed to radiological rays and ultrasounds.

Thus, some collective and individual prevention measures can significantly reduce all these risks:
- Wearing scrubs or a white coat, gloves, glasses and masks.
- Ventilation and aspiration of the environment to reduce the concentration of dust and gases, responsible for lung risks.

- Have a hand basin (non-manual, with hot water, equipped with liquid soap dispensers, disposable hand towels, disinfectant hydro-alcoholic solution, and a trash can).
- Handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting soiled surfaces, transporting soiled materials in tight sealed packaging, must be subject to rigorous procedures.
- The dress code of the dental staff corresponds to a high level of biological risk: short sleeves, tunic pants, hair up, short nails without varnish, hands and forearms without jewellery.
- An adapted storage of the pharmaceutical and chemical products presents risks such as the risk of falling or overturning packaging.
- The presence of suitable fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, electrical installation in compliance with the safety standards is essential.
- Single-use instruments must be used only once and then disposed of.
- Use appropriate collection containers for the disposal of care materials that have been in contact with the patient (cotton, compresses, probes, syringes, etc.).
- Do not eat or drink at the workstation.

To sum up, we should be conscious of all details that may threaten our health and hygiene by being aware of the significance of working position and stretching recommendations, considering that our daily work is almost entirely based on physical practice. In addition, it is essential to take into account hygiene, safety and equipment details to avoid risks of work accident, health damages and discomfort. Finally, it would be the icing on the cake to finish by emphasizing the primordiality of the dental assistant help, who facilitates any practice and ensures a well-organized working environment under the rules of art and self-care.

References
2. An introduction to ergonomics: risk factors, MSDs, approaches and interventions, A report of the Ergonomics and Disability Support Advisory Committee (EDSAC) to Council on Dental Practice (CDP. ADA.org. 2004