

## Digital Dentistry to the Rescue

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The pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a public health emergency of global concern. All professional fields including dentistry have been greatly affected. Dental procedures create a high risk of transmission due to the proximity of the dentist to the patient and the generation of aerosols. Limiting dental procedures to emergency and urgent care procedures has been recommended.<sup>1</sup> However, the symptoms of caries and periodontal disease usually present when the disease has advanced from a moderate to a severe stage which may lead to irreversible damage to the dentition.<sup>2</sup> Thus providing dental treatment at an early stage becomes a necessity. Delaying routine dental visits in this pandemic is causing the creation of more complex dental issues which increase the burden of cost on the patient or government where dental treatment is provided free of cost to the population. There is now a need to re-establish routine dental care. The dental profession is now adapting to this pandemic and return to routine dental care is gradually taking place.<sup>3</sup> One of the ways in returning to routine practice is to incorporate digital dentistry in our dental practice. Digital dentistry involves the incorporation of digital devices (intraoral and extraoral scanners, cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), and processing software (computer-assisted-design/computer-assisted-manufacturing (CAD/CAM) prosthetic software, software for planning implant surgery, together with new aesthetic materials and powerful manufacturing and prototyping tools (milling machines and 3D printers) thus transforming the dental profession. The advantage of going digital includes reduced chairside time, reduced number of appointments, less contact with patients' oral fluids, less need for disinfection of instruments and clinic surfaces and less number of personnel handling patient's dental records.<sup>4</sup> Today, the digital revolution is changing the workflow and

consequently changing operating procedures. One example is intraoral scanners<sup>5</sup> that allow us to take an accurate optical impression of the oral cavity, using only a beam of light. The optical impression is now replacing the classic method of taking an impression with a tray which was never liked by patients and often technically difficult, is likely to disappear in coming years. Moreover, the information on dentogingival tissues acquired from an optical impression can be used not only to make a diagnosis and for communication, but also to design prosthetic restorations. This not only minimizes the risk of cross-infection but also improve patient acceptability to dental treatment in the pandemic. Adopting digital dentistry in daily practice can be a way forward as more restoration options are available delivering longer lifetimes, and better aesthetics.

### DISCLAIMER

None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None to declare.

### ETHICAL STATEMENT

Not applicable.

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