

IAPHD-UG-Essay Competition-2017

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Topic: UG students: “Role of dentists in Swacha Bharat mission”

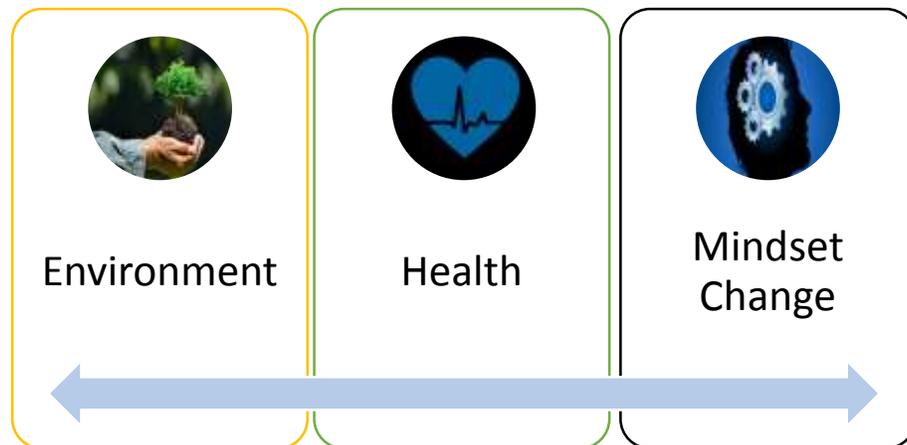
Total word count: 990

"Is cleaning only the responsibility of the karamcharis? Do citizens have no role in this? We have to change this mindset."

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

A pertinent question asked by our Prime Minister when the Swachh Bharat Mission was launched on 2nd October 2014. The aim of Swachh Bharat campaign is to keep the environment clean and pollution free, which has a great impact over the health of the community members. This movement is not complete without achieving a state of positive health for all people. The mouth is the doorway for many diseases and the Indian dental community has an important role in maintaining cleanliness not only of the oral cavity but also of the environment.

FOCUS AREAS:



1. ENVIRONMENT

“Stop complaining and Start Participating “should be the motto on the lips of every dentist. The dental community should be part of the environmental cleanliness drive. The individual dentists or the dental organizations can adopt the nearby areas with a theme of maintaining cleanliness.

Dentists can play a role by:

- ❖ Opposing open defecation and contributing to building of community toilets.
- ❖ Growing greenery along the areas, which are unclean.
- ❖ Giving a leadership role for creating environmental awareness through gatherings and discussions.
- ❖ Supporting Plastic-free initiatives.
- ❖ Spreading the message through social media.
- ❖ Involving the community as active participants.
- ❖ Help in painting of public walls and bus stops to give a fresh clean look.
- ❖ Devoting few hours of time every week.
- ❖ Supporting NGO’s involved in sanitation drives.
- ❖ Indian Association of Public Health Dentistry can initiate a Swachh Award for people who are champions of change.

2. HEALTH

The role of the dentist is of prime importance in the Clean India Mission since only clean people can be healthy. Oral diseases are one of the important non-communicable diseases in the country. The dentists can don the mantle of keeping the citizens free of oral diseases and thereby ensuring optimum health. For this, we have the humble but powerful tool, *the toothbrush* that sweeps away debris and can

keep oral diseases at bay. The dentist should educate everyone especially the children in the proper usage of toothbrush.

✓ National Service Scheme (NSS):

The NSS unit proposed in all dental colleges can be a useful tool to overcome this hurdle and the Public Health Dentists by the nature of their close association with the community can be agents of change.

✓ Satellite Clinics

The satellite clinics mandated by the Dental Council of India can be harbingers of the clean India movement and can spread awareness about oral health and cleanliness.

✓ To educate people especially school children:

It is impossible to achieve oral hygiene by treating each one but through proper instructions and demonstrations of oral hygiene methods, prevention of dental



diseases is possible. Emphasis is needed to reduce the usage of tobacco and alcohol usage among children.

3. MINDSET CHANGE

Mindsets need to change if Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to make the country litter and squalor free is to succeed. Today most of the people although albeit late have realized the importance of a clean environment. This mindset change would lead to mobilizing more number of people to this noble initiative and can bring the change India has needed since decades.

Possible avenues to achieve mindset change by Dentists:

- ❖ Linking the initiative to local icons in the towns and villages as linked to Mahatma Gandhi at National level.
- ❖ Leading by example not for some days but through sustained leadership.
- ❖ Administering cleanliness pledge administration to students, employees, employers and public.
- ❖ Propose changes to school curriculum to implant the ideas of cleanliness.
- ❖ Help in changing of perception that only government is responsible for cleanliness.
- ❖ Help to eliminate superstitious beliefs regarding health and cleanliness.
- ❖ Camps to sensitize people, especially students, about the importance of cleanliness, health and oral hygiene.

SWACHH IN DENTAL PRACTICE

Waste generated in dental practice needs to be disposed properly to further the cause of Clean India Mission. These materials can be hazardous to the dentist and the community if not disposed properly. Presently there is increase in the demand

for dental care and the number of dental clinics thereby greatly increasing the volume of biomedical waste. Even though the dentists are aware about different colour coding and methods of disposal, most of them did not follow it in practice (Bansal M et al., 2013) The dentists should segregate at source which protects waste collectors from the risk of infections and injuries. Dentists should register themselves voluntarily under a common biomedical waste management services to further the vision of a clean India.

ROLE OF WOMEN DENTISTS

Women have always been the champions of change. The role of women dentists is truly an inspiring one and their active participation is needed for the success of this mission. Women dentists can network with other women entrepreneurs with similar vision and take up various activities linked to Swachh Bharat Mission. They can give leadership for identifying gender specific sanitation problems and their solutions.

To conclude, I firmly believe that there are many opportunities for the dentist to play a central role in Swachh Bharat Mission. In the same vein, I also am of the opinion that there is no magic wand to solve India's civic problems. Everyone wishes for a cleaner India but only few of us are willing to go the extra mile. The idea is to integrate both the oral health and general health, which is a stepping-stone for the success of this mission. Dentists should be community leaders and role models in the Swachh Bharat Mission. With dogged perseverance and the key role of dentists the goal of a clean India in environmental and health aspects is definitely possible in 2019, the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. A broom in every adult's hand and a toothbrush in every child's hands will go a long way in promoting clean India.

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