



## Alternative Treatment Options And Their Role In Modern Dentistry: A Review Of Literature

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### Abstract

Orthodox dentistry deals with the head and neck region generally and undoubtedly the oral cavity but alternative dentistry is concerned with the unacknowledged impact of oral health on the general health of a person. It emphasizes use of non-toxic restorative materials supplemented with use of techniques like acupuncture, neural therapy, various forms of natural and spiritual healing methods. Acupuncture is of much value in the treatment of temporomandibular dysfunction syndrome and facial pain supported by randomized control trials, and is also useful in control of post-operative pain. The increasing concern about the adverse effects and soaring costs of conventional healthcare has attracted efforts towards the development of alternative treatment methods. All these alternative methods are to be used as subordinates to conventional methods and not as sole therapeutic approach.

**Keywords:** Alternative medicine, Hypnosis, Modern dentistry, Acupuncture, Holistic dentistry

### Introduction

A The health sector care has experienced drastic changes and advancements lately, majority of it has resulted from people being concerned about less hazardous and non-invasive treatment procedures with the spotlight on alternative and complementary medicine. Alternative dentistry as a treatment modality emphasizes on the overall health of a person, the approach refers to the human body as a system in harmony with the health status of a part or organ crucial to the functioning of another. It brings forward the impact of oral health on the functioning of overall health of a person. Practicing alternative dentistry does not limit a practitioner to the oral condition but supports creating prophylactic measures to several pathologies that may affect the patient's head, neck, jaw, and spine.<sup>1</sup>

Alternative dentistry or therapy as a treatment is an alternate to the orthodox methods. A report by a European commission state that the alternative therapy is a spectrum comprising of different treatment modalities, practices, beliefs, theories that are not a part of the widely practiced health system of a society. Frequently we cross paths with the patients who want a "mind-body complimentary therapy" to treat their health conditions. As the name suggests "alternative medicine" means the non-drug approach, but several times it is none other than just a placebo.<sup>2,3</sup>

Acupuncture is a part of the alternative dentistry that originated in China approximately 3000 years ago. Involving insertion of needles into various parts of

the body as an approach of treatment acupuncture has proved its efficacy in several circumstances presenting in dental practice, to name a few, we have temporomandibular dysfunction syndrome and pain management. Sjogren's disease is also a condition where the efficacy of acupuncture was demonstrated by Blom et al. Although being practiced since ages the efficacy of acupuncture is still doubted in regular practice.<sup>4</sup>

### **History:**

Alternative dentistry dates to the 1800, with the recognition of harmful effects of amalgam restoration and ban on the use of mercury by the National Dental Association resulting in the ban of mercury use by many countries. With the recognition of the harmful effects of amalgam and the ban on the use of mercury by the National Dental Association resulted in the origin of Alternative dentistry.

Price's theories were further supported by the work of a dentist named Melvin Page who coined the phrase "balancing body chemistry" considering tooth decay an "outstanding example of systemic chemical imbalances." Stating that widespread mineral deficiencies were an underlying cause of several health conditions including goiter, heart diseases, tuberculosis and diabetes, Melvin marketed a mineral supplement.<sup>4</sup>

Back in the year 1993, the "Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health" was established by the Britain's Prince Charles claiming alternative medicine to be an effective alternative approach to conventional biomedicine. MEDLINE introduced a Mesh term for scientific publication in alternative medicine in 2001. It continued to be a part of regular healthcare system through 2004, including homeopathy. Although being widely practiced the regulation and licensing of alternative medicine varies within and between the countries.<sup>2</sup>

Acupuncture was described formally by yellow emperor Hung Li, in 2600 B.C. in the book "Yellow emperor's book of medicine".

Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann founded Homeopathy and developed the medicines prescribed in homeopathy being published for the first time in the *Materia Medica* in 1927.

Hypnosis is another significant part of alternative dentistry. Hypnosis is an age-old therapeutic method, but "Modern Clinical Hypnosis" dates to 1773, the word "Hypnosis" being coined by James Braid, M.D. approximately 1843. Hypnosis is a highly relaxed state of mind wherein the conscious as well as subconscious mind of the patient is focused to receive therapeutic suggestion without any hinderance.<sup>5</sup>

Ayurveda developed because of the contributions of ancient Indian sages around 4500 to 1600 B.C. Ayurveda is based on the use of naturally available herbs for the treatment of diseases.

### **Alternative Treatment Option And Their Role:**

#### **Role Of Ayurveda In Dentistry:**

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian system of medicine aged 5000 years that uses the power of herbs to as a remedy for several diseases. The right herb combination maintains the body's harmony. Formulated herbal tooth powders and pastes are a safe and therapeutic remedy for a number of diseases, which are combined in a way that helps in cleaning the teeth as well as prevention of a number of diseases such as dental pain, bleeding gums, mouth fibrosis due to betelnut chewing habits, poor dental root, sensitivity, numbness, calculus accumulation.

A dominant ingredient of several ayurvedic formulations is neem, which forms a significant component in herbal toothpaste and powder. It has proved to be a powerful oral hygiene aid. Propolis is a resin based natural substance of pines collected by bees is reported to cure oral ulcerations. Chamomile, rosemary, lime flower, vervain and valerian have sedative properties that are being used in alternative dentistry.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Role Of Homeopathy In Dentistry:**

Homeopathy, is another powerful and natural approach followed by alternative dentistry practitioners. This therapy is found to be safe, effective, and non-addictive. Dental ailments such as dental caries, post extraction bleeding, dental abscess, can be effectively treated by homeopathic remedies.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Role Of Nutrition In Dentistry:**

Nutrition forms the basis of overall human health system. Proper diet and nutrition have a powerful impact on patient's oral health. Alternative dentistry

also focus on the nutrition or diet of the patient as even this affects the patient's oral health. The belief of alternative dentists is that stress and tension are linked to the diet. Dietary excess or deficiency increase the body's need for essential vitamins and minerals, also the stress and tension fuel the fears of the patient.<sup>8</sup>

### **Role Of Acupuncture In Dentistry:**

Acupuncture has several applications in dentistry, some particular to prosthodontics are listed below:

- Gag reflex
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Temporomandibular disorders
- Xerostomia

### **Gag reflex:**

The control of gag reflex is a phenomenal demonstration of the efficacy of acupuncture to help dental patients in a non-sedative way. It produces a rapid, simple response in the patient thereby controlling the gag reflex.

### **Nervousness Or Anxiety:**

Anxiety is common problem encountered in the dental practice and can also cause hinderance in the treatment process. It can be dealt by simply using acupuncture. Anxiety (mild to moderate) is dealt with needling at site called as GV 20, present at the vertex a little posterior to the vertex of the head. Four supplementary needles are employed and additional points on the hand and foot also may be used. The patient starts getting relaxed within a span of two minutes.

### **Temporomandibular Disorders:**

Both acute and chronic temporomandibular disorders can be treated well using acupuncture, and the target points used here are local to the head and neck region that when needled lead to analgesia, reduction in muscular spasm, and elimination of TMJ clicking; all these can be accomplished by needling the lateral pterygoid muscle that eliminates spasms of these muscles, reducing anterior displacing forces on the meniscus of the joint.<sup>9</sup>

### **Xerostomia:**

Saliva plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of oral environment, temperature, control of infections, aids in retention and so patients suffering from xerostomia face difficulties receiving prosthesis. Xerostomia can lead to infections in the mouth, difficulty in swallowing, bolus formation, articulation of words and so on. Xerostomia results in difficulties for the patients receiving removable prosthesis as saliva plays a vital role in maintenance of oral environment, the temperature as well as retention of the prosthesis.<sup>10,11</sup>

### **Role Of Hypnosis In Dentistry:<sup>12</sup>**

The following are the uses of hypnosis in dentistry:

- Gag reflex
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Adaptation to new dentures
- Control of salivation

### **Gag Reflex:**

Many patients have a feeling of anxiety when an impression is to be taken, the retching develops a fear and embarrassment causing uneasiness to the patient. Using hypnosis and delivering specific hypnotic suggestions to the soft palate and upper pharynx can help the patient lose excessive sensitivity resulting in reduced discomfort and improved cooperation.

### **Nervousness Or Anxiety:**

It is evident that many people hold a phobia towards dental treatment. Psychologically a patient sees the dentist as a trespasser invading their body by dealing with the oral cavity. Research carried out by Kirsch, Montgomery and Saperstein in the U.S.A showed that hypnotic interventions are quite powerful and clinically useful in modern day dentistry.

### **Adaptation To New Dentures:**

A widespread problem faced by every prosthodontist is the non-cooperative behavior of the patients in adjusting to the new dentures. Hypnosis can encourage and motivate, that would enhance the tolerance to the discomfort experienced.

### **Control Of Salivation:**

Patients with excess salivation hinder the dentist's ability to work better and execute the treatment faster, in such cases hypnosis can help reducing

salivation for the desired period until the treatment is done.

### Conclusion:

Dentistry has evolved over years. Alternative dentistry is the holistic, biologic, and natural approach to dental ailments. Modern day dentistry is all about focusing on patient's oral health while also giving emphasis on the functioning of overall health. The alternative therapy delivers phenomenal results when employed as an adjunct to the orthodox dental practices. Nevertheless, these techniques can never replace the conventional approach but can surely aid in achieving better treatment responses from the patient. In short we can tell, conventional dentistry when combined with alternative dentistry can help us create wonders in the management of dental ailments.

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