

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Pearls in Pediatric Dentistry

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ABSTRACT

Pearls in Pediatric Dentistry is a series of educational articles that address essential clinical applications for all levels of dental care providers who come in contact with pediatric dental patients. Sources of information for these modules are derived from standards, best-practices, evidence-based care, academic consensus, and finally clinical experience. Modules will address clinical care issues from infancy all the way to into adulthood. Specific topics to be covered are infant oral health, developmental disturbances, trauma, cariogenic medications, oral habits and interventions, acceptable restorative treatments, minor surgical procedures, space-maintainers, special needs dentistry, behavior management, and special topics.

Keywords: Infant oral health, Maxillofacial developmental disturbances, Cariogenic medications, Deleterious oral habits, Behavior management.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPOSED TOPICS TO BE COVERED IN PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

The articles under the series titled “Pearls in pediatric dentistry” will be covered in 11 modules as a column in the next few issues of the journal. The purpose of these modules (Fig. 1) is to provide information and knowledge base to the student of dentistry. The benefits to a postgraduate candidate are that the modules can be used in clinical and academic research application with intent to further knowledge and research. Practitioners and clinicians will utilize these modules to implement best practices and standard procedures with evidence-based treatment. For policy makers, the modules will serve to address curriculum issues, improve public health knowledge, and enable them to tackle challenges such as access to dentists and affordability of care.

The information sources for these proposed modules are from guidelines developed by professional organizations, peer-review articles, academic consensus and experience of authors who have been in academic dentistry in the United States.¹⁻⁴ Further, practical applications of the knowledge are also based on clinical experience of authors.

The topics are arranged in a chronological order to discuss oral health issues starting from birth to adulthood. In the first module under the title *Infant oral health*, the purveyor of the module will gain knowledge about dental caries and how to prevent them including the role of diet, oral hygiene and fluoride use. This topic is followed by a discussion of *Developmental disturbances* in oral tissues, which includes anomalies in hand tissues, such as teeth and abnormalities in the soft tissues, such as frenii, tongue and uvula.

Many children nowadays take numerous medications orally. These are sweetened to make them palatable. The role of

cariogenic medications and practical ways to guide parents to prevent cavity formation will be discussed in the third module of the series named *Cariogenic medications*.

Once the child becomes a toddler, some of them still persist with *deleterious oral habits*, such as digit sucking, pacifier habit, infantile swallowing and tongue thrusting habits. Early interventional methods will be presented to ward off an unfavorable outcome.

Following the block of modules where prevention is highlighted, a comprehensive discourse will follow in *restorative treatment*, including pulp therapy in permanent and primary dentition, full coronal coverage and caused effective restorations benefitting children.

A practitioner with interest in pediatric dentistry or a dentist, who treats children, will encounter situations where minors oral surgical procedures, such as frenectomies, operculectomies, removal of mucoceles, surgical extractions of mesiodens or ankylosed primary molars. A practical, safe and easy to implement methods will be presented with the aid of numerous clinical photographs and line diagrams under the title *minor pediatric oral surgical procedures*.

In the unfortunate event of a premature loss of primary teeth, to intercept the dental occlusion from becoming more compromised a presentation of various *space management* appliances and the timing of treatment will be considered in module eight.

Pediatric dentistry encompasses dental management of the special needs patient. The most common medical conditions afflicting children, such as Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy, pervasive developmental disorders, hearing loss, attention deficit disorder and their management in a dental office will be extensively reviewed under the topic *Special Needs Dentistry*.

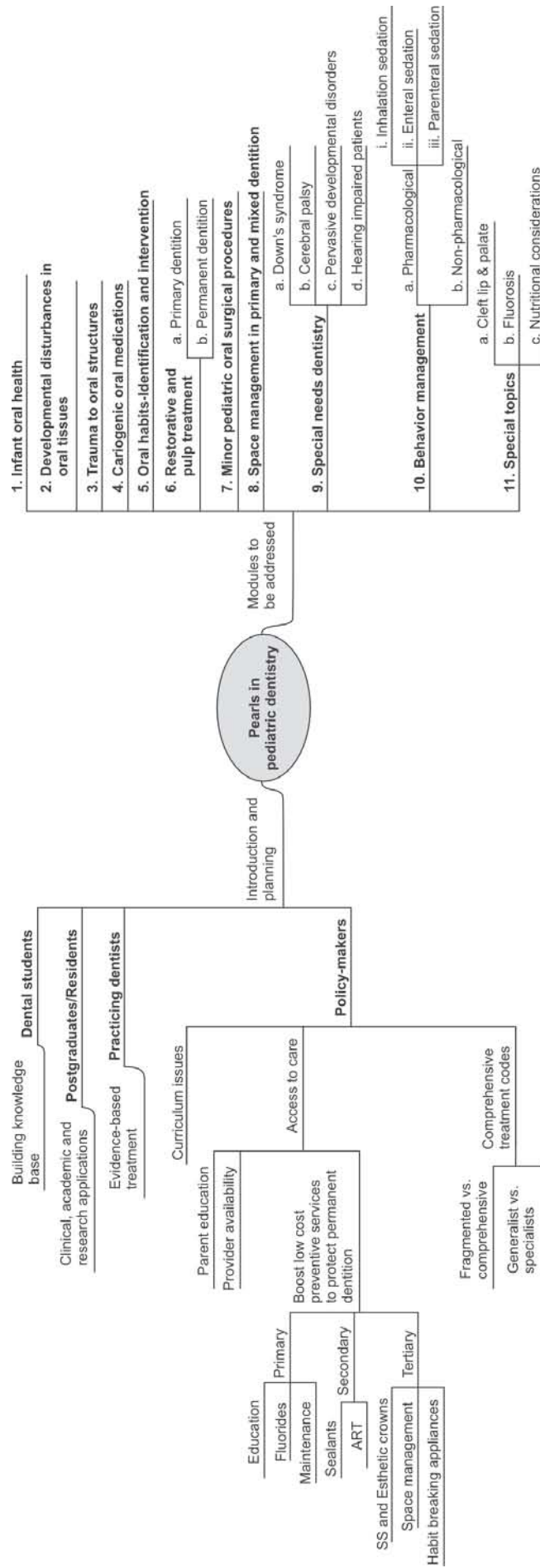


Fig. 1: An outline of the proposed articles and uses in pediatric dentistry that will be published in the next few issues

A very subjective matter, which involves the performance of dental treatment in a child to assist in developing a lifelong positive impression of dentistry is called behavior modification. It is use of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods. An indepth treatise on inhalation, enteral and parenteral relation techniques and various age appropriate non-pharmalogical techniques which are practical and effective and offered under the topic *Behavior Management*.

Some matters, which pertain to children and are uncommon, need to be addressed in providing the dentist, a wholesome education in pediatric dentistry. These involve cleft lip and palate, fluorosis and nutritional considerations which are conglomerated under the title of *Special Topics*.

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