

# Holistics: A New Approach in Dentistry

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## Dear Editor In Chief,

Holistic dentistry is a traditional method which is based on the thought that the whole body is a single unit and any changes or alteration in one part of this unit can affect the whole unit. Holistic dentistry which is also called as alternative dentistry, biologic dentistry, or biocompatible dentistry is similar to complementary and alternative medicine for dentistry. This basically deals with the unrecognised impact on overall health of a person by oral health conditions. It implements the use of non-toxic restorative materials and deals more with alternative techniques like acupuncture, naturopathy, homeopathy etc.<sup>1</sup>

Holistic dentistry is thought to have originated in the year 1800. It was the National Dental Association which recognized the harmful adverse effects of the use of amalgam in restorative purposes and thereafter banned the use of amalgam in clinical practice on the patients. Following this, many countries banned the use of mercury. The present generation health sector is seeing a rapid transit towards the use of alternative therapies for treatment needs. People have become more inclined to complementary medicine. The modern day approach is not limited to only an area of a person's body, but it takes into consideration patient's overall health. So, the dentists using this new approach are concerned more about the effects of the oral care on the general health of the patient.<sup>1</sup>

Holistic dentists follow a preventive approach and create preventive solutions to problems that may

involve various parts of patient's body like head, neck, spine etc. They put in use various alternative methods to locate point/areas of chronic disease which prove difficult to locate by conventional methods. Treatment is individualized. A holistic dentist follows the requisites for biological based care. The six components of biological based health care include: 1) Biocompatibility; 2) Bioesthetics; 3) Biochemical Balance 4) Biomechanics; 5) Bioenergetics; 6) Bioethical Care.<sup>1</sup>

## Principles of Holistic Dentistry

Holistic dentistry follows few basic principles:<sup>2</sup>

- Proper nutrition in order to prevent and reverse degenerative dental disease
- Avoidance and elimination of toxins from dental materials
- Prevention and treatment of dental malocclusion.
- Prevention and treatment of gum disease.

## Procedures involved in Holistic Dentistry

There are various procedures which are followed under holistic dentistry. These basically depend and vary according to dentists and their needs. The various procedures involved are Ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy, neural therapy etc. The various procedures are described as under:

**Ayurveda in Holistic Dentistry:**

Regarded as one of the oldest systems of medicines with its roots from India, Ayurveda is considered as one of the effective alternatives in oral care delivery. This basically involves the use of specified formulations to produce herbal tooth powder and paste which prove effective and safe for number of diseases. The ingredients play a crucial role in cleaning the teeth and prevention from various dental problems like bleeding gums, halitosis, oral fibrosis, tooth related pain etc. The most important ingredient is Neem.<sup>3</sup> The extracts from the bark and leaf of Neem, Grape seed, Clove, Fennel play a vigilant role in maintaining healthy gums and teeth. Propolis is also considered to cure oral ulcerations. These natural products avoid the use of synthetic ingredients like saccharin, artificial colors, and artificial flavours etc.<sup>4</sup>

**Nutrition in Holistic Dentistry:**

Holistic dentists discuss nutrition as it has a visible impact on oral health. Dietary excesses or deficiencies are related to the body's need for essential vitamins and minerals required for proper metabolism.

**Aromatherapy in Holistic Dentistry:**

This basically uses essential oils from flowers and different parts of plants which act as hormone-like stimulants in the patient's body. They are basically derived from sandalwood, bergamot, basil etc.<sup>5,6</sup>

**Homeopathy in Holistic Dentistry:**

It proves as a natural approach to the dental practice. The therapy is considered as safe and non-addictive that proves its efficacy equally in both males and females. It mostly uses: aconite (foxglove); gelsemium (yellow jasmine); and argentum nitricum (silver nitrate).<sup>7</sup>

**Hypnosis in Holistic Dentistry:**

Here the patients are made to relax their bodies and focus concentration on suggestions provided by the hypnotic therapist or trained dentist. It decreases

fear, anxiety and makes the use of anaesthesia unnecessary.<sup>8</sup>

**Benefits of Holistic Dentistry:**

It is natural, non-toxic, aesthetic, bio-compatible approach of treatment. It uses a combination of various modern day as well as traditional alternatives in curing of oral adverse conditions. These therapies believe in treating the root cause of disease rather than curing the symptom.<sup>9</sup>

Even though these alternative therapies have been widely accepted, these techniques often come with side effects. As a result of which the practice has seen a bit of criticism. Therefore proper knowledge and understanding about the holistic approach is of utmost importance to effectively put in use the phenomenon of Holism in Clinical Dental Practice.

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