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Mini Review

Future of Oral Medicine and Radiology specialist in India

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ABSTRACT

An oral medicine doctor is trained to diagnose and manage patients with disorders of the orofacial region, essentially as a "physician of the mouth." An oral medicine doctor has received additional specialized training and experience in the diagnosis and management of oral mucosal abnormalities (growths, ulcers, infection, allergies, immune-mediated and autoimmune disorders, cancers), salivary gland disorders, temporomandibular disorders (e.g.: problems with the TMJ) and facial pain (due to musculoskeletal or neurologic conditions), taste and smell disorders; and recognition of the oral manifestations of systemic and infectious diseases. The life of an oral medicine and radiology specialist is till date not considered an utmost branch. In the scenario when it is the upcoming sector of dentistry, the future prospects of this speciality is the hot topic of discussion.

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1. Introduction

As said by Sir Martin H. Fischer, "Observation, Reason, Human Understanding, Courage; these make the physician"; the statement depicts the changes in eye grounds that are associated with systemic diseases of the body and sound knowledge and perseverance is required to diagnose it. Oral medicine serves as an intricate network that combines medical and dental specialties with a narrow border. This branch is an important bridge between Dentistry and Medicine, and career in it means one can treat medically compromised patients with knowledge of pharmacology and biology to help manage patients with chronic painful oral disorders and to help establish new clinical guidelines for patient care in the aura of Dentistry.

This speciality is bifurcated into two major specialties: Oral medicine and Oral Radiology. The importance of mouth in medicine has been recognized since the earliest known medical writings when Hippocrates and Galen considered the tongue to be the barometer of health and emphasized the diagnostic and prognostic importance of tongue. This led to the birth of Stomatology and hence the Oral Medicine and Radiology specialist. As a dentist or an oral health expert we are blessed with the opportunity of providing a healing touch to trillion lives in zillion ways and being a specialist in Oral Medicine and Radiology adds an extra wing to the dreams.

In India, unfortunately oral medicine and radiology has been an outdated branch of Dentistry due to ignorance and extortion. It's not a bliss and boon in the case where in our country there are highest number of tobacco chewers. India houses more than 45% of the smokers of the world.

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It is a country which leads in the cases of satanic oral cancer and other potentially malignant disorders of the oral cavity. We being stomatologists can be a pillar along with multispecialty branches in saving the lives of many. An OMDR specialist serves to be the forefront person in the field of dentistry which gives an array of opportunities in different myriad avenues. As always said Prevention is better than Cure, the early diagnosis of oral precancerous and cancerous lesions is the master key and an OMDR specialist is the locksmith. It bridges the horizons between different specialties and gives holistic treatment plan to provide relief to ailing patients. This article thus depicts the future of oral medicine and radiology specialist in India.¹

As already said there are multiple avenues where an Oral Medicine and radiology specialist can try his/her career in. Oral medicine is a specialty concerned with dental and medical related disorders of the oral and facial region including orofacial manifestations of systemic diseases. The first and the foremost arena where an OMDR specialist can try his career in are academics and dental education in India. As our branch has emphasis on research and education, there are different dental colleges which employ an OMDR specialist for different posts as an academican. The job as a teaching faculty provides experience, satisfaction and exposure.²

Knowledge has no limits and so is education. Being in an academically inclined speciality of Dentistry, an OMDR specialist if has interest in education and further up gradation of knowledge PhDs and fellowship programs can also serve a runway where an OMDR specialist can land his/her plan on.³

There are good numbers of opportunities in Government sector who empanel permanent dentist with OMDR specialization to serve. ESIC, ECHS, Army dental corps and railways hire dentist for examination and diagnosis of patient with oral condition so that patient can be reimbursed for the treatment.⁴ High salaries and other allowances and amenities adds perks as these are the organizations which solely hire OMDR specialist for treatment purposes.⁵

In the difficult pandemic times since 2020 March, telemedicine and teleconsultation has served the corner stone and an OMDR specialist has solely got the opportunity among the dentists to practice telemedicine and relieve patients from pain and other disorders.^{2,3}

Private Consultations can also serve a ground for an OMDR specialist in private clinics as we are the ones who give an eye stroke to the lesions and plan treatment for general dentists keeping in mind the systemic manifestations in the patient. If one has opportunity and finances, an OMDR specialist can enter into entrepreneurship and private practice as we are the ones who specialize in diagnosis, case study and treatment plan for patients.³ General dentistry is already learnt in the undergraduate level and specialization in Oral Medicine and

Radiology adds a tinge in classic treatment of patient.

An OMDR specialist can also try his/her career in diagnostic scribing for US healthcare industries. US healthcare has strict rules in medico legal records maintenance and we can serve virtual doctor to the patients in foreign countries making notes and treatment plan for their betterment and record maintenance.^{3,5}

Cone beam computed tomography interpretation is the affiliation for an OMDR expert as we specialize in maxillofacial radiology reporting. World class OMDR specialist are a part of the oral cancer foundation interpreting maxillofacial radiographs and cone beam computed scans using software for 3D interpretation of oral disorders.⁶

Forensic Odontology is a premier territory where an OMDR specialist can try his hand in. Further, exploring this field with certification and fellowship programs in Forensic Odontology can provide employment as Forensic Odontologist in criminal and civil sector.⁷ Post graduate curriculum in Oral Medicine and Radiology includes the forensics in the syllabus and age estimation and other exercises are performed which adds an extra perk of revenue for an OMDR specialist.⁸

In the Post Graduate program in Oral Medicine and Radiology, Research serve the syllabus and thus clinical research can also be the goal of OMDR specialist. An OMDR specialist as a clinical researcher can be hired by Indian council for medical research, Pharmaceutical product development and other research councils in India giving job satisfaction and permanent employment to the specialist of this branch.^{9,10}

Pain clinics, an upcoming idea in India has served as an agency that generates millions in Abroad nations. Venture for pain clinics serves an innovation and barrier breaker for an OMDR specialist as we are the ones who deals with Orofacial pain giving various therapies to patients having this ailment. It is a healthcare facility that focuses on the diagnosis and management of chronic pain through a multi disciplinary approach.⁹ There are various pain clinics set up and making excellent revenues in metropolitan cities in India.

Counseling de-addiction specialist and Oral Psychosomatic medicine is another arena where an OMDR specialist can hang on. We are the ones who deal with disorders due to addiction and counseling is the prime focus for the treatment of oral psycho somatic disorder. Employment in Community health centers and public health centers to serve a de-addiction alarm is given to an OMDR specialist.¹⁰

The doors of European and Middle East countries are always open to skilled and qualified OMDR specialist. Various vacancies are available for us in UN bodies like UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO. In addition to these, OMDR professionals skilled in cardio pulmonary resuscitation

CPR, life support systems, dealing with cases of medical emergencies, expertise in intravenous and intramuscular injections can excel in various other arena of health sciences. Thus job opportunities in abroad, globally are open for OMDR specialist.

Another sector for employment of OMDR specialist is Pharmacovigilance which is concerned with the detection, assessment and prevention of adverse reaction to drugs. As the name of the branch suggests medicine and medication therapy management is the prime centre of the theory and treatment plan for the patient from an OMDR specialist, globally renowned pharmaceutical companies hire them at handsome salaries for medicine review.

Therapeutic nuclear medicine is also an option for OMDR expert as big corporate hire nuclear medicine expert for oral cancer treatments. Nuclear medicine generates very high revenue in healthcare market serving a huge ground where an OMDR specialist can try his/her career. Also, radiation oncologists for oral cancer are hired by the corporate and an OMDR specialist with up graded certification is eligible for the task. There are several genetic disorders which have severe manifestations in the oral cavity and OMDR specialist is the one who can serve as an oral geneticist who can diagnose systemic genetic disorders post birth.

Like the innumerable number of stars in the sky, the constellation of oral symptoms varies so greatly that oral physician gets trapped in the myriad for apt diagnosis. Considerably overlapping signs and symptoms required thorough knowledge of clinico pathological characteristics of each condition and a systemic approach to diagnosis. Injections intraregional is the treatment plan learnt thoroughly by the OMDR specialist and practicing intralesional injection on patient with oral potentially malignant disorders can serve higher source of revenue.

A profession does not stand on the foundation of its curriculum books or students but on how each of its specialties is treated and practiced. After the above explanation, oral medicine clearly echoes that this specialty is the one which besides opening the door to every smart dental practice, it serves as a collective link between dentistry and medicine, forensics, psychiatry, neuroscience and genetics, thereby highlighting its panoramic range in determining the health of the society.

Oral medicine had earlier faced several repercussions even by the supreme body of dentistry in India which had made it an undermined aspect of Indian dentistry. Today at present times, even the supreme body has understood the importance of our branch and we are given due respect in every field. The dental health is of paramount importance and an OMDR specialist can serve a vital role in shaping the action plan of fighting oral diseases and hence an OMDR specialist must be given his due by giving incentives and

increasing job opportunities. Till date, the future of the oral physicians is somehow a perplexing enigma. It should not be the one as the patient care should become the prime focus and an OMDR specialist plays the role somehow or the other in primum non nocere.

2. Source of Funding

None.

3. Conflict of Interest

None.

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