

# Mind Over Matter...COVID 19 (An Orthodontist's Perspective)

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“COVID 19” pandemic has changed the life of many and the members of the orthodontic fraternity are of no exception to be affected. A state of uncertainty has engulfed us with panic and fear during these challenging times. Challenges have not been new to our dental fraternity, and we have overcome natural disaster, unknown diseases, and peer pressures from other professions in the past. This period is “just a pause, not the end”. The pause is to rebuild oneself with hope and courage.

Our profession is built by knowledge and there is no denial that we as orthodontists have the longest relationship and bonding with our patients. For orthodontists certain troublesome questions may arise constantly regarding financial liabilities, patient visit, and many more. As the phrase goes: “There is always light at the end of the tunnel.”

## Questions Raised by an Orthodontist During Difficult Times

When can one “safely” get back to our profession?

With all the PPE and the other sterilization protocols in order, one is “free” to work even now. But the billion dollar question in the mind of every orthodontist, is will be ever get to the same old normal and wished we had a time machine in hand to predict it. Now that we don't and with so much of ambiguity still about the SARS- CoV-2 virus, when to get back to normal work should be at the orthodontist's sole discretion based on relevant scientific guidelines. It is our duty as health care professionals to look especially into emergency needs of our patients like a painful poking wire end or a broken bracket. However in dealing with elective procedures especially aerosol generating, it is preferable to err on the side of caution.

Is there going to be a drop in the percentage of orthodontic cases that we expect in our profession?

Yes there might be a drop in new cases for a short period. Let us always be positive, patients will always need a professional like us.

What would one say about the dilemma whether to continue with visiting practice?

Yes, one can visit dental clinics that are strictly following sterilization/disinfection protocols and follow the COVID guidelines issued by the government. If not, these patients should be given the option to continue treatment at any other clinic in their vicinity which is standardized as per COVID requirements.

Should financial liabilities be managed?

This is the time to rethink our strategies in regard to finance and take into consideration the importance of not spreading infection over our monetary benefits.

There is also an immediate need to identify and support members of our society who are going through severe financial liabilities, the probability of whom would be more among the beginners who have just invested in practice and are forced to work at a risk just to make the ends meet.

During the lockdown, we have been attending or conducting webinars day and night on protection gears, aerosols, patient managements, teleconsultations, refining our knowledge on orthodontics, and constantly updating on COVID 19 information. Let us “rethink our work style, reassure self, and regain our confidence.”

Following is a list of nine points to prioritize during this challenging time:

1. Physical health improvement: Breathing exercises, meditation, and exposure to adequate sunlight.
2. Mindful eating of nutritious food for immunity boosting.
3. Relive childhood: Engage in hobbies, such as, reading books, cooking, and listening to music.

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4. Work on your mental well-being by journaling your thoughts, blogging.
5. Social wellness by engaging in quality time, especially with children and parents. This pandemic has given us a conducive opportunity to teach our children the lesson of “need” over “want” and to live happily with minimal expenses. It is also a befitting opportunity to spend time with our parents showing care and concern.
6. Live a spiritual life: Have faith and hope.
7. Do a SWOT analysis (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat analysis) to start growing.
8. Grow as a community: Check on your neighbors; just a phone call works wonders. Even on your patients.
9. Slow down: Do not succumb to peer pressure which could get one’s mind restless and anxious (The debates on which is the best HEPA filter in the market is never going to end.).

At this time of crisis, when the orthodontic community is baffling with many uncertainties, a statement made by the Master Clinician Dr Wick Alexander would prove worthy to ponder. When asked by the Associate Editor Journal of Clinical Orthodontics, Dr Sinclair about his philosophy in life and how does it guide him, the Master Clinician replied: “I

attempt to live by, I am third...God, Others and then Me.”<sup>1</sup> He stated that this creed keeps him grounded, keeps his priorities in check, and helps him realize how blessed he was to have so many opportunities in life.

On the same note, during these challenging times we should be grateful for the many opportunities we have had in life and believe that this too shall pass, no matter how difficult it would be and how long it would take.

Jai Hind and God bless the IOS family!

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