

LETTER TO EDITOR

¹RAAHIM SALMAN ABDUL GHAFAR, ²BHAWNA DALWANI, ³JAVERIA MUQADDAS

Globally, many researches are present that have compared men's anxiety, trauma, or stress-related disorders with females, and most of the time, results show that female patients are more anxious and reactive when visiting the dental clinic as compared to men.¹ The sound of handpieces, surgical instruments, and the waiting area triggers the women's peace of mind more than the men's. The most common reason that came to the mind of the dentist or the researchers is the behavioral difference due to the gender difference, sex hormones, or the menstrual cycle phases which affect the psychological or physical being of the women. The review study also justifies this reason by mentioning that about 50 to 80% of women face constipation, fatigue, fluid retention, headache, anxiety tension, or feeling of loss of control during the premenstrual phase so that is why behavioral changes and reactions are considered normal for the women.²

The present sex hormonal studies defining the reason for the women's behavioral differences keep the dentist's mind relaxed and treat all females as normal patients. However, psychologists and forensic medicine have the opposite opinion regarding behavioral changes among female populations. Studies in the past revealed that childhood trauma or child sexual abuse (CSA) has long-term consequences on the brain and oral health as well. Females who have suffered from child sexual abuse in the past are very anxious during their dental treatment. The procedural protocols like the sound of the instruments, lying on the chair, and touching of the head and neck by the dentist, exaggerate the childhood trauma among female patients.³

Such female patients have compromised oral as well as mental health. The report in 2002 revealed that almost 150 million girls face CSA each year, and in middle-income countries, up to 36% of females have to

face CSA in their childhood, which is more than men (29%).⁴ So it is very important for the dentist to think about and detect such cases, and for that dentists need professional training under forensic guidance especially in Pakistan, where such cases are underreported. Moreover, dentists must know how to collaborate with psychologists to help such female patients mentally as well. Studies are required on how psychologists can help dentists manage oral health issues, and dentists are trained to detect and refer such patients to psychologists so that the main causative factor of compromised oral health can be eliminated.

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¹ Raahim Salman Abdul Ghaffar, Research Coordinator, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: salmanraahim4@gmail.com

² Bhawna Dalwani, Operative Dentistry and Endodontics Resident, Altamash Institute of Dental Medicine, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: bhawnadalwani95@gmail.com

³ Javeria Muqaddas, House Officer, Altamash Institute of Dental Medicine, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: javeria.muqaddas@gmail.com

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