

Public Issues in Orthodontics

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Orthodontics is advancing not only in technology but also in the coverage of service to the people. Multidimensional research and teaching/learning in orthodontics have made the service more popular among the general people. However, we, the professionals have manifold challenges ahead. We need to see how best the quality orthodontic service can be delivered, which is cost-effective and that ensure the sustainability of the achieved results.

Talking about the quality orthodontic service within the reach of the people; it is important to cater the accessible treatment only through the accredited orthodontic professionals who can render quality service. Accessibility of orthodontic service to the people is a challenge due to difficult geographical terrain; in which the populations are financially, socially and culturally marginalized. We, the professionals have the responsibility to make the service accessible by designing community-based preventive and interceptive orthodontic modalities at an affordable cost to benefit all strata of people. Integrating the community-based orthodontic service into the existing National Community Health Program is a matter of challenge for us to reach the unreached. Until and unless we make the orthodontic service accessible and affordable to general public, the popularity of orthodontic service cannot be enjoyed by the people. Actually, we need to search and research the mechanism to develop the community-based preventive and interceptive orthodontic services suitable for Nepalese context. Modalities like Health Insurance Scheme or other welfare schemes may be smartly coined to suite it. Let us be pragmatic and think in this direction. Now, as we have post-graduate orthodontic programs in the country; the PG students and faculties can be utilized as a resource to innovate the mechanism for affordable and accessible orthodontic service.

Another professional challenge is the quality assurance of service to the people. The practitioner should possess optimal knowledge, skill and attitude required of a qualified orthodontist. In fact, the accreditation of the graduates by the orthodontic professional organization other than Nepal Medical Council shall be made necessary for quality assurance; which may be accomplished through Continuing Professional Development and/or case audit mechanism. It can really open the path for quality orthodontic service to the people. Much more work need to be done in this area as well.

The value for money of the people needs to be guaranteed by the professionals. The patient deserves the best of the service, which is our professional obligation. In fact, we should opt for reducing the curative services to minimize the complexity of procedure and to meet the affordable cost. For this matter, right diagnosis in right approach at right time with the right treatment planning and sustainable result must be the motive of the orthodontic practice. On the other hand, we should not get carried away with rapidly changing technologies that suggest the treatment modality of same nature with different names and higher prices. We need to be cautious and judicious as well. Discussion in favor of value-based care is required, which weighs the evidence on treatment outcome against the cost of an intervention, in order to determine the value of that intervention. Such assessments are crucial to develop the best health care pathways, ensuring that the health care systems are affordable and effective. Thus, it is required to promote the idea that value does not equate to price and investment in real innovations can reduce overall expenses.

The above mentioned challenges give opportunity to the professional organization like ours to think for accessible, affordable and quality orthodontic services to the people not only in Nepal but globally as well.

