

Special Issue on

Oral health of children with special health care needs (SHCN)

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Editorial

Oral Health of Children with Special Health Care Needs (SHCN)

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EDITORIAL

Children with special health care needs (SHCN) are individuals with a medical, physical, psychological and/or social condition that requires individualization of dental treatment. They are one of the neediest, yet most underserved groups of dental patients.

The number of individuals with SHCN is growing worldwide, which may be attributed to the improvements in medical care and strict antidiscrimination legislation in many countries. The dental practitioners are obligated to be familiar and ensure compliance with antidiscrimination regulations and legislation and should be trained in providing adequate dental care for SHCN individuals.

The management of children with SHCN creates hesitation and anxiety among health professionals including dentists because it requires specialized knowledge acquired through special training, increased awareness, adaptation, and accommodative measures beyond what are considered routine.

The provision of dental care to these individuals presents unique challenges to the dental staff. Therefore, dentists dealing

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with them should possess thorough knowledge of the relevant medical and orofacial abnormalities and their implications and should liaise with medical specialists in order to formulate safe and effective dental preventive and treatment plans. Prevention of dental diseases in SHCN individuals is of paramount importance especially for those who are severely or profoundly medically compromised.

This special issue on oral health of children with SHCN includes six review papers on medical and dental findings and their implications in: Down's syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autism and Thalassemia. The aforementioned conditions are examples of special care needs in terms of a mental, physical, psychological and medically compromised nature. The seventh paper provides updated and evidence-based recommendations and dental management options available for children with SHCN. The papers in this special issue discuss the medical, dental and orofacial abnormalities and characteristics of SHCN individuals

and would be of interest to both medical and dental professionals. They will assist dentists and also help medical professionals in understanding the need to maintain optimal oral health for

children with SHCN and the importance of liaison between the two professions.

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