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Topic: Less is More: Combating Overtreatment in Modern Conservative Dentistry

Abstract

Overtreatment represents one of the most pressing ethical and clinical challenges in contemporary dentistry, as excessive or unnecessary interventions jeopardize patient outcomes, escalate healthcare costs, and undermine trust in the profession. Overtreatment refers to the removal of healthy tooth structure or the performance of clinically unjustified procedures. Overtreatment frequently initiates a detrimental cycle of repetitive restorative interventions, conflicting with the foundational principles of conservative dentistry that prioritize natural tissue preservation and patient-centered care. This presentation explores the philosophy of "less is more" within the framework of modern conservative dentistry. It critically analyzes the drivers of overtreatment, including diagnostic uncertainty, lack of knowledge, financial pressures, and outdated clinical paradigms, while exploring its consequences for oral health ecosystems and professional integrity. Contemporary advancements in precision diagnostics, such as high-resolution digital imaging and laser fluorescence, now enable early detection of carious lesions, facilitating targeted, non-invasive management. Concurrently, breakthroughs in bioactive materials, advanced adhesive systems, and remineralization therapies empower clinicians to arrest disease progression and restore function with unprecedented conservation of tooth structure. These innovations allow clinicians to halt or reverse disease progression without the need for invasive restorations. Once a tooth is restored, it enters a cycle of continuous follow up, repair, and perhaps failure, underscoring the importance of preserving natural tooth structure whenever possible. This presentation aims to inspire young practitioners to embrace minimal intervention as the cornerstone of ethical, effective, and patient-centered care.