

MODERN MANAGEMENT OF DENTAL CARIES AND HOW IT MUST BE APPROACHED BY PRACTITIONERS

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Current concepts in the management of caries have had a paradigm shift from the conventional or historic management of dental caries that was taught in dental schools decades ago. The mechanical methods of management of caries that were taught earlier have proved to be ineffective in long-term studies and the philosophy of minimum intervention in caries management has ushered in an evidence-based, risk-based and prevention-focused ideology in the management of caries.

Clinicians in this era who had been taught these earlier mechanical methods of caries management will need to re-train and understand that caries being a complex multi-factorial disease will need alteration of the biological factors that contribute to the caries process. Performing restorative procedures is the secondary strategy and controlling the factors that lead to the disease is and will be the primary intervention strategy for this disease. Clinicians will also need to comprehend that the management of caries will need to be effected across all levels of their practice, with the services of a dietician, a dental hygienist, and the practice associate having clearly defined roles in it.

Operative intervention in the management of caries by the dentist will require a measured approach as scientific evidence has previously established that restorations do not last a lifetime. A minimum intervention approach advocated today is not a trend as many dentists would imagine, but rather an evidence-based and prevention-focused concept that has evolved from caries research of over three decades. Clinicians are suggested to re-think older concepts and re-educate themselves on the current thinking and techniques which facilitate such an approach.

Operative mechanical methods of managing caries have become outdated because the profession is moving towards a more care-driven philosophy as opposed to a procedure-driven one. As part of the Editorial Board I would urge readers to familiarise themselves with the modern approach of caries management and as healthcare professionals consider the healing process of patients with caries, as a priority, rather than the operative procedures.