

## EDITORIAL



**Professor N. O. Nartey**

### **THE IMPACT OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) ON ORAL HEALTH**

Globally, dentistry is in a situation in which it has never encountered and thus has no immediate response. Numerous dental clinics and schools shut down because there was no speedy response to mitigate the spread of the novel COVID-19 virus in dental practice. Seven months into the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the infection rates continue to spike in many countries.

What is the global situation of the COVID-19 virus Pandemic? As of today, the Global community has reported COVID-19 infection in 214 countries and territories, about 17.1 million COVID-19 cases and 668,000 deaths since China reported its first cases to the World Health Organization (WHO) in December 2019. Many countries including Ghana were placed under lockdown for several months to control the spread of the novel corona virus infection. The lockdown was able to mitigate the spread of the virus to a certain extent and consequently most countries have removed selected restrictions. However, several countries have recorded a second wave of COVID-19 infection which has affected the Global return to normalcy.

How have we fared as a Nation during the COVID-19 Pandemic? The first two cases of COVID-19 infection were reported in Ghana on the 12th March 2020. The Ghana Health Service and the Government of Ghana has managed to control the number of active infectious cases to some extent. At present, there are 3681 active and 35,142 confirmed COVID-19 cases. Ghana has recorded 175 COVID-19 related deaths.

What is the impact of the COVID-19 on the Global Health? In addition to the disruption of the World economy, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unimaginable effect on the health services of numerous nations. To meet the needs of COVID-19 patients, hospital resources such as advanced intensive care units have been diverted from equally demanding healthcare conditions such as cancer care, cardiovascular and endocrine conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on healthcare workers. Several healthcare workers have been infected with the COVID-19 virus and several have succumbed to the infection.

Several Dental Clinics including the two Dental School clinics in the country temporarily closed down during the lockdown period. Selected dental clinics in the country have started re-opening to offer oral healthcare services to patients. However, there is a second wave of the COVID-19 virus pandemic in numerous countries and vaccines to prevent the infection are barely at trial stages thus there is no medication to protect or cure COVID-19 infection.

The New York Times reminded the world that dentistry had the most risk of any profession in relation to COVID-19. As oral health professionals therefore, who work in one of the portals of the corona virus, protection of our staff and patients should be paramount at all times. Dental Clinics should adapt and follow updated international guidelines for the prevention of Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia in Medical Institutes to protect all who work and visit the clinic.

As a profession, we are going through extraordinarily hard times and thus we need to support one another, not only to ensure that we do not get infected but also to ensure that our mental and emotional wellbeing is healthy and sound.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - GDA



**Dr. Paapa Puplampu**  
**President - Ghana Dental Association**

Dear Colleagues,

We started this year with so much hope and zeal. Barely did we initiate plans, than the novel COVID-19 pandemic rock the world. Ghana is not in isolation, so we stayed focused with the intent to turn things around. Unfortunately, a well planned World Oral Health Day this year (WOHD2020), was badly interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, so is our Annual General Congress 2020 and the FDI Congress 2020.

The practice of Dentistry and delivering of Oral Health Care to the people of Ghana has been severely affected, even with the institution of COVID-19 protocols. I must borrow the words of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, "We are not in normal times, but this too shall pass". It has become important to remind ourselves to observe the outlined protocols for cross infection prevention and control in our various clinics and hospitals as we follow the directives of the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service. As an Association, we encourage members to keep safe and educate ourselves with communications from the International Dental Federation (FDI), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Commonwealth Dental Association (CDA).

Please educate yourself on the "DOS" and "DON'TS" of the season. Make good use of the Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) available and DO NOT compromise on protocols, to the disadvantage of the care giving team. Remember, we need to be healthy to help others stay healthy. Be careful in patient selection. You may want to attend to emergencies only, observing strict protocols. Avoid high-risk clients and procedures.

We are optimistic, while this COVID-19 pandemic remains, we will develop new strategies to make Oral Health Care of our populace, a priority. Please partake in the survey developed by our hard working Ghana Dental Journal Team, to help inform and formulate our own protocols to enhance our practice. When the dust of COVID-19 settles, we will get back to do what we like doing best, Oral Health Care. More grease to the elbows of our galant members who are part of the COVID-19 Team nationwide, please keep safe. May we remain together with our sister Associations, in this fight.

May the good Lord grant us enough grace to surmount this pandemic and remain focused to deliver health care to our people.

Long Live the Ghana Dental Association

Long Live the Ministry of Health

God Bless our Homeland Ghana, and make our Nation Great and Strong.

Thank you.