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## Short Communication

## Role of oral physician in private dental setting

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## ABSTRACT

The Oral Medicine and Radiology branch is an essential bridge between Dentistry and Medicine. Oral physicians are often sought to manage the oral symptoms or know if the oral disease poses a risk of oral cancer or cross-infection in the clinics. Recent studies indicate an increased prevalence of oral habits-related lesions in India. Hence, proper support of OMR specialists along with a global strategy to promote the clinical practice of Oral Medicine among patients and all other healthcare professionals is inevitable to increase awareness of the specialty, thus encouraging the budding OMR specialist to establish themselves independently in private practice.

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## 1. Introduction

*A career in Oral Medicine means you can treat medically compromised patients, use your knowledge of pharmacology and biology to help manage patients with chronic painful disorders or help establish new clinical guidelines for patient care." - Dr. Craig Miller.*

An oral physician is identified by the medical community as a dentist who is adequately trained in the field of Medicine, Radiology, and Applied Oral pathology to manage a variety of stomatological diseases that fall outside the scope of routine dentistry. Private practice of dentistry is the maintenance of health through the assessment, diagnosis, management, treatment, and prevention of any disease, disorder, or condition of the orofacial complex and associated structures within the scope of the practitioner's approved education, training, and competence in their personnel dental office.<sup>1</sup>

The past decade has presaged a lot of interest amongst Medical and Dental professionals in the specialty of Oral

Medicine.<sup>2</sup> The Oral Medicine and Radiology (OMR) branch is an essential bridge between Dentistry and Medicine. There has been an increased incidence of patients reporting oral lesions to the outpatient clinics. A rise in medical awareness amongst the general population, allergic incidences to newer drugs, and recent pandemic status may all be attributed to the increased incidences of oral lesions. Oral physicians are often pursued nowadays to manage the oral symptoms or prototypes which are a risk of oral cancer or cross-infection in the clinics.<sup>3</sup> An Oral physician has been bestowed with adequate knowledge to diagnose a variety of oral manifestations of local and systemic origin. Competency in medicine focuses on managing sore mouth, orofacial pain, and oral precancer. The target population for oral physicians includes cases of xerostomia, anemic stomatitis, specific herpetic, candidal infections, mucositis, and gingivitis, aphthous stomatitis, allergic, atopic stomatitis, oral lesions of mucocutaneous diseases, oral precancers, post Herpetic and non-surgical cases of trigeminal neuralgias, temporomandibular joint disorders, burning mouth syndromes and atypical facial pain.<sup>4</sup>

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## 2. Scope of Private practice for an Oral Medicine and Radiology specialist

There are ample ways for an Oral physician to thrive per se like Maxillofacial diagnostic and imaging centers, Orofacial pain clinics, Oral cancer screening clinics/palliative care centers, Oral medicine specialty clinics, dental management clinics for medically compromised patients, and even OMR specialists as a general dental practitioners in private practice.

## 3. Success in the Specialty of Oral Medicine

Consistently toiling is one of the primary keys to success. The success is possible with good diagnostic ability, In-depth knowledge in identifying and removing the etiology from local, genetic, environmental, drug sources, systemic sources, etc. With logistic use of therapeutics in managing the symptoms and treating the oral illness, Modifying diet and habits to suit the outcome, correcting underlying systemic deficiencies, and hormonal and immune dysfunctions, an Oral Physician can endeavor enhanced outcomes. India has one-third of the oral cancer cases in the world.<sup>3</sup> It accounts for 30% of all cancers in India, posing a significant challenge to preventive and diagnostic health services; the malignant transformation rate of most potentially malignant disorders is high. Hence, proper support and care of aged individuals will help the dentist in proper diagnosis and treatment planning programs.<sup>5</sup>

## 4. Challenges Faced by OMR Specialists in Setting of Private Practice

There can be a lack of referrals from general dental practitioners; a dearth of awareness among patients regarding Oral physicians as specialists in treating oral mucosal lesions is also one of the causes. There has always been a stigma relating to "Including OMR specialists in Oncology teams." Also, Head and Neck cancer patients lack awareness about oral medicine and radiology dental Speciality. Overlapped OPD with dermatology, ENT, and oncology surpasses the impact. Also, one of the most essential shortcomings is the lack of awareness for dental radiologists as diagnostic and interventional imageologist, a paucity of OMR specialist setups in rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Cross-infection in dentistry can occur through many pathogenic organisms found in the oral cavity and respiratory tract.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, nowadays, we live in an era of eco-epidemiology, with the global emergence and re-emergence of many communicable diseases with emerging agents such as Ebola, Corona Virus, etc.

## 5. Conclusion

There are many stress-related dental problems - TMJD, Oral Lichen Planus, and Periodontal disease. The stomatological

diseases are those that come down under the grey areas of Medicine and Dentistry. General physician and Dentist falls very short of knowledge regarding the systemic, environmental, food, and drug influences on oral lesions. A need for a skilled oral physician to manage these oral diseases has been significantly felt in recent times. Jointly, we need to advance a global strategy to endorse the clinical practice of Oral Medicine among patients and all other healthcare professionals to increase awareness of the Speciality.

## 6. Conflict of Interest

None.


## 7. Source of Funding


None.


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