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Committed to Dental Excellence

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Press Release

Proposed paradigm shift in oral healthcare from modern to traditional form -- a disaster

Indian Dental Association (IDA) vociferously condemns the latest directive announced by the Central Council of Indian Medicine (the Indian regulatory body for the study and practice of Ayurveda) to permit post-graduate students of Ayurveda to receive training and practice of 'Shalya' and 'Shalakyā' and in no uncertain terms calls it a retrograde step of mixing the systems. IDA will resist this decision at all costs by unequivocally condemning the uncivil ways of the Central Council of Indian Medicine to arrogate itself to vivisect modern medicine and empower its practitioners with undeserving areas of practice. This is an impending paradigm shift in oral healthcare from modern dentistry to traditional.

Shalya is general surgery and shalakyā diseases pertains also to oro-facial specialisations, which would make them legally eligible to perform dental procedures viz extractions, fillings and root canal treatments. Hence, according to the directive the PG scholar of Shalya and Shalakyā will independently perform 'DantaRog' Chaldanta – DantaNirharan (Loose Tooth Extraction) and Krumidanta – Lekhan & Puranshastrakarma (Carries Tooth/Teeth- Root Canal Treatment).

The Indian Dental Association states that 'one nation one system' policy in medical education, is inviting a 'cocktail of disaster' by producing a 'breed of hybrid dentists' -- a resultant degradation in the quality of oral health service providers. This is a particularly retrogressive step altogether as IDA is committed to the advancement of dentistry by means of international collaborations for providing predictable and successful oral healthcare outcomes.

Dentistry is a specialized field involving research and discoveries within the discipline— which has led to dramatic changes and paradigm shifts in terms of professional practice. Dentistry can be credited for initiatives such as its ahead-of-the-curve role in health promotion, risk assessment, disease prevention, treatment planning, treatment therapeutics, restorative materials, and predictable clinical outcomes, among other achievements. Dental research is really the scientific underpinning of the entire profession, basically, everything that a practitioner does is dependent upon scientific research and biomedical research in general. As the oral environment is part of the human biologic system that is subject to change every day, it is imperative that clinicians understand the biologic characteristics of the individual before they undertake any kind of diagnostic, preventive or treatment procedures. Dentistry is, now more than ever, a profession that is

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truly at the recognizable forefront of promoting oral health, assessing systemic health, and pioneering new approaches to both diagnostics and restorative and regenerative treatments. In this light, the directive of the Central Council of Indian is shocking.

The dental profession is demeaned by the action of the Central Council of Indian Medicine rather than being uplifted at par with international standards. Oral health education and practice is a modern system of medicine requiring appropriate skill and learning. The procedures conducted by an oral health professional having earned the degree of 'Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) &/or Master of Dental surgery' cannot be practiced by other disciplines. It takes 5 years plus, and an additional 3 years for specialisation. This enables one to obtain post-graduation degrees in Conservative Dentistry to handle root canal treatment as well as in the speciality of Oral Surgery for doing extractions. The above move defeats the very purpose of a separate branch of modern system of medicine (oral health including dentistry) which is widely recognized not only in India but throughout the world. 'The Dentists Act 1948' regulates the dental education, dental profession and dental ethics. This it came into existence in March, 1949. Standards have been set for dentistry incorporating innovations and cutting-edge technologies—which rapidly— have changed the way dental surgeons manage and practice dentistry. To emphasize -the digital revolution that includes computers and telephones, digital radiography, CAD/CAM chairside restorations, intraoral imaging, computerized patient records, and practice management software. To top it all, new generation high tec products—such as high- intensity curing lights, caries diagnostic tools based on laser evaluations, and others—continue to change dentistry at a rapid pace. The link between oral and systemic disease is now recognized. With it came the understanding that without oral health, no person is truly healthy.

But Central Council of Indian Medicine wants us to step back and rethink our focus.

Furthermore, the link between oral disease and systemic diseases —such as cardiovascular disease; delivery of preterm, low-birth-weight babies; diabetes; and others—has been given scientific credibility too, and now both the public and the broader medical community are beginning to embrace this. This is significant because it motivates dentists to work more closely with their colleagues in medicine, nursing, and pharmacological sectors as an integral part of the biomedical team. Contrary to this here we are be projected to being on the same platform with traditional systems of Ayurveda, Naturopathy Yoga, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy which have a fundamental difference in the science itself. Let these systems of treatment develop their own surgical disciplines from their own ancient texts and not claim the surgical discipline of modern dentistry as its own.

As it is the dental professionals have been hard hit by COVID-19 pandemic and to add insult to injury is the hurting of their sentiments with this kind of notification. We strongly resent and condemn this notification and urge immediate withdrawal of the content pertaining to our discipline. Mixing of systems or 'kichri' will defeat the very purpose of various curriculum, evidence-based treatment procedures, professional training and exclusivity.

There are 300 plus Dental Colleges in the nation churning out thousands of Dental Graduates per year who are working in self-employed capacities as neither graduates nor

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postgraduates have job opportunities in the Government sectors. The opportunities for jobs in the private sector too are not in proportion to the number of fresh graduates every year. Overall, this has led to an extremely stressful situation for the dental profession.

The Indian Dental Association (IDA), established in 1946, is the largest recognized national body of oral health professionals in the country. It operates through its 28 State & 9 UTs branches and nearly 700 local branches throughout the country, for the welfare and professional advancement of over 74,000 members in the country. IDA's vision is to promote oral health, integrate with general health and improve quality of life of the people of India.

IDA sincerely hopes that the government will take the appropriate steps in rectifying the controversial notification with immediate effect.

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