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Perspective article

Integrating narrative medicine in periodontal surgery: A holistic approach

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Narrative medicine was launched by Dr. Charon with a conceptual picture of a narrative type in daily medical practice based on a model of empathy, trust, professionalism, and reflection.¹ Narrative medicine has been applied for teaching how to know the experience of an illness to enhance patient-dentist discourse² and further achieve the holistically dental care.³ Narrative medicine was also reported to be a good tool for the improvement of nonoperational capabilities, mini-clinical evaluation exercise, objective structured clinical examination performances.^{4–6} Recently, narrative medicine was found to effectively facilitate oral hygiene instruction for periodontitis patients by interns' perceptions.⁷ In addition, the conduction of narrative medicine-based oral hygiene instruction was reported to improve plaque index and reduce probing depth in non-surgical periodontal therapy.⁸

Periodontal surgery is an invasive management to resolve periodontal pocket depth > 5 mm after phase I periodontal therapy. However, patient may experience anxiety or fear that can further cause psychological problems leading to postpone further treatment. Prior to the periodontal surgery, the implementation of holistic dental care can provide comprehensive support and help patients better cope with the surgical procedure and recovery. Integrating narrative medicine into the realm of periodontal surgery was proposed to enhance the overall patient experience as well as foster a good connection between patients and dentists. In this article, the authors addressed and discussed how narrative

medicine may have the benefits for patients who received periodontal surgery according to the model of empathy, trust, professionalism, and reflection.

First, emotional support is an action of empathy. Dentists can demonstrate the understanding of patients' pain and needs during routine visits. Paying attention to the patients' stories could show the concern for their feelings and the ensures of their treatment needs. The use of clear language to explain the surgical procedure and recovery process is necessary. In addition, dentists should make sure that patients have the opportunity to ask the questions.

Second, trust can be built up by structured communication. Building trust is the foundation of a successful therapeutic relationship between patients and dentists. It is suggested to establish a reliable relationship through open and structured communication. Dentists' professional knowledge and experience can enhance the patient's confidence to receive the periodontal surgery treatment. In addition, timely updates to patients and addressing their questions or concerns are also very crucial to gain patient trust.

Third, adequate information sharing is important to show the professionalism. Dentists display a high level of professional attitude, including accurate diagnosis, appropriate treatment plans, and precise execution of the periodontal surgery. Dentist should explain the necessity of periodontal surgery and expected outcomes to patients. Furthermore, dentists provide abundant information before periodontal surgery so that patients can make the informed decisions.

Finally, regular review and improvement means the reflection on practice. Regular reflection and evaluation of clinical practice could improve dentists' skills and patient

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Table 1 The holistic approach in periodontal surgery by integrating narrative medicine.**Key points**

Emotional support
 Structured communication
 Adequate information sharing
 Regular review and improvement

care. Dentist should actively engage in professional development and update on the latest treatment methods and technologies. In addition, sharing the experiences with colleagues could contribute to further learning and potentially facilitate patient outcomes.

By the implementation of narrative medicine, dentists can create a conducive environment to enhance patients' satisfaction and ensure optimal medical outcomes to achieve the so-called shared decision making.⁹ The periodontal surgery treatment process will be not only medically effective but also deeply humanity and compassionate (Table 1). Further evaluation of the outcome of integrating narrative medicine in periodontal surgery is warranted. The feedback from the patients' perception also needs to be investigated.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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