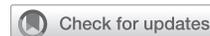


CANNABIS

Treating patients who use cannabis



BACKGROUND

What should you do if a patient comes for treatment and you suspect he or she is under the influence of cannabis? How can such a patient provide informed consent? These issues will face dentists more and more with the legalization of medicinal and recreational cannabis use.

DETERMINING CANNABIS INTOXICATION

No government-regulated standardization of potency and purity related to cannabis is currently available. As a result, dentists and other care providers have no definitive way to determine the level of intoxication of a patient. Even measuring the blood concentration of the active ingredient in cannabis provides no consistent indication of impairment. Dentists are left to make a judgment as to the patient's level of intoxication based on common clinical signs of cannabis use. These include dizziness or trouble walking; red, bloodshot, or glazed eyes; silliness or giggling for no reason; anxiety; paranoia; and difficulty remembering things that just happened.

CRITERIA FOR INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is an essential part of the ethical practice of dentistry, reflecting the protection of the patient's rights to agree to treatment. Dentists must fully explain the treatment, all reasonable alternatives, and the risks of treatment and of not delivering treatment. Patients must be sufficiently coherent to accurately understand what the dentist is telling them about the treatments and risks. Dentists are the ones who must assess whether the patient has that level of understanding. The entire

process should be documented, also noting the reasons why the patient was deemed competent or incompetent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dentists should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of patients who are impaired because of the use of cannabis or other agents. This includes staying current with the findings related to cannabis use and misuse so that they can share the information with patients. Patients should be informed about the effects related to cannabis toxicity, especially those related to oral health.

Clinical Significance

Until definitive methods are developed to accurately measure cannabis intoxication levels, the dentist must rely on his or her observation of signs and symptoms of toxicity. As for other drug impairment situations, patients should only be treated when they can provide informed consent to procedures. Dentists must document their thought process to indicate how he or she carefully considered the patient's competence to provide such consent.

Calilung XM: Patients under the influence of cannabis: Should you treat them in the office? *J Calif Dent Assoc* 47:131, 2019

Reprints not available

COMMUNICATION

Creating a top-producing practice



BACKGROUND

Creating a team that is functioning optimally relies on the presence of mutual respect between the team and the dentist in 5 specific areas. These include communicating expectations, valuing the contributions of team members, rewarding them for showing initiative, placing people where their personal strengths lie, and handling team members' mistakes properly.

EXPECTATIONS

Dentists must fulfill their communication roles as mentor, motivator, and monitor for their dental teams. Mentoring includes communicating the specific direction and focus for the practice, which is expressed in a written mission statement. This statement should be crafted through the express ideas of the dentist as well as those of the team. Having such

a statement guides the team so that they will work together toward a common goal.

In his or her motivator role, the dentist should discuss realistic, measurable goals for improving the practice at least once a quarter. This helps to guide the team toward the outcomes that will best help the practice succeed.

The monitor role includes a monthly check-in with each staff member where feedback is given regarding his or her efforts. This keeps the team on track and responds to any miscommunication that may have occurred. Addressing these issues early on avoids having them become bigger problems.

TEAM CONTRIBUTIONS

The dentist conveys respect and value to the team for their contributions. Team members should feel comfortable when discussing their thoughts about the dentist's strengths and personality related to the mission of the practice. This vision for the practice is expressed through the morning huddle, when the entire staff reviews the objectives of the day and details that need to be discussed. This leads team members to consider how their actions contribute to the purpose of the practice. This understanding of the vision and their part in it helps team members own part of it, which then leads to good decisions and appropriate actions. In addition, negativity tends to disappear.

INITIATIVE RECOGNITION

Staff should be rewarded when they take appropriate action without being told or in recognition of their loyalty to the practice's goals. Team members should work together to solve problems and take appropriate measures when faced with difficult situations. When staff members develop solutions, they are then accountable for them. The dentist is freed up to focus on his or her primary responsibility, which is patient care.

Rewarding staff conveys the dentist's sincere appreciation for their work. All employees who reach work anniversaries of 5 years or more should receive a gift. Other rewards can be given to meet the staff member's specific needs, such as paying for car

repairs, giving a bonus after a difficult case, giving a single mom money for a nice dress for her daughter's wedding, or helping staff members with an interest-free loan or extension of credit.

PERSONAL STRENGTHS

Behavior speaks as loudly as words, and team members' abilities should fit with their roles. When an individual performs tasks that utilize his or her specific strengths, it is much more likely he or she will be productive and less likely to make mistakes or complain. Having a job that fits one's abilities supports a cheerful disposition and consistently excellent customer service.

MISTAKES

Staff members will make mistakes. Rather than focus on being judgmental or verbally punishing a team member for his or her error, the dentist should assume the error occurred because of a misunderstanding or as a result of taking a chance and failing. The goal should be to find solutions. The staff member should be encouraged to ask questions and clarify so that he or she can grow and not be scarred by a single failure.

Clinical Significance

Effective communication is essential to the success of a dental team. The dentist must convey the vision and mission statement of the practice to the team so they can work toward achieving the appropriate goals. When dentists create a supportive atmosphere in their practices and ensure that their teams feel valued and respected, retention won't be a problem. Staff members will want to work for a dentist who listens, understands, and communicates effectively.

Agarwal AK: Communication skills of top-producing practices. *Dent Econ* 109:30, 32, Feb 2019

Reprints not available

CONTRACTS

Before you sign an employment contract



BACKGROUND

Prospective dental associates may or may not require the input of an attorney when they are offered a contract at a dental practice. With the input of an attorney, the dental

associate may be able to negotiate terms that aren't favorable or seem too restrictive. Some of the issues that should be addressed in these negotiations are contract basics and terms and conditions, which include restrictive covenants and