EDITORIAL REVIEW

Redefining Dental Practice in the AI Era: Bridging Clinical Expertise with Intelligent Technologies

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ABSTRACT

Introduction of dental practice with the concept of artificial intelligence (AI) is an idea that is a radical change in the conceptualization of oral healthcare delivery and experience. This editorial review discusses the changing paradigm of AI in dentistry, which includes the use of AI in diagnostic imaging interpretation, treatment planning, clinical decision support, and prosthetic design. At the same time, though the AI technologies prove to be incredibly effective in pattern recognition, detecting diseases and performing predictive analytics, their implementation into the clinical process causes significant questions concerning the professional responsibility, educational readiness, ethical implementation, and maintenance of the humanistic principles of patient care. Combination of the old clinical knowledge with clever computing enables unheard of possibilities to improve the quality of diagnosis and treatment. Nevertheless, these benefits can only be actualized with a careful adoption that makes AI an addition and not a substitution of clinical judgment.

INTRODUCTION

There is a major shift in the dental practice landscape as technologies of artificial intelligence keep gaining platform in clinical practice, process diagnostics, and treatment planning models. Combining the historical clinical knowledge with the smart computer technology is not just a technical enhancement but a paradigm shift on how dental care is defined, provided, and experienced [1]. In the face of this paradigm shift in the profession, both opportunities and challenges are critical aspects that must be scrutinized to see that technological progress does not negate the final objective of better patient outcomes.

Applications of AI in the field of dentistry are currently being utilized.

Modern AI systems lie on both sides of the diagnostic field, with caries detection and periodontal assessment on one side and oral cancer screen and orthodontic simulation on the other [1]. Deep learning models especially convolutional neural networks have been shown to be diagnostic in a range of imaging interpretation tasks as accurate or more so than experienced radiologists. These features should be viewed as a paradigm shift in the way diagnostic information can be derived out of clinical data and can provide the opportunity of earlier disease detection, lesser diagnostic variations, and increased treatment accuracy.

An example of how such technologies can

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Bangladesh Journal of Medical Science Vol. 25. Supplementary Issue 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.3329/bjms.v25i10.86617

transform radiography interpretation is the integration of AI with radiography. Algorithms in machine learning that are trained on large data sets of dental radiographs may detect subtler pathological alterations that cannot be perceived by humans, especially in highly challenging conditions, such as fatigue and time-related pressure or cognitive overload [2]. Research has shown that AI assisted interpretation of panoramic radiographies, bitewings and cone-beam computed tomography scans can achieve the level of sensitivity and specificity which is comparable to that of an expert radiologist. Nevertheless, application of these research results in daily clinical practice should be approached with a keen understanding of the circumstances involved in their implementation, the validation needs, and the quality assurance models.

In addition to the diagnostic use, AI is transforming the treatment planning and design of prosthetics. The computer-aided design and manufacturing systems can be improved with intelligent algorithms to optimize the morphology of crowns, the positioning of an implant and orthodontic mechanics using patient-specific anatomical and functional parameters [3]. They are systems that are learned by their previous treatment experiences hence continue to refine their suggestions as a result of a natural feedback mechanism. The outcome has been more individualized mode of treatment that takes into consideration individual difference in a manner that was not feasible in traditional planning paradigms.

Clinical Decision Support and Predictive Analytics.

Another frontier that has an impactful implication on dental practice is the emergence of AI-powered clinical decision support systems. These systems are supposed to combine the history of the patient, clinical presentation, radiology, and population-wide evidence to derive proceedings of treatment and risk assessments [4]. Such systems would be able to recognize patterns and associations by unifying the information on several domains, which can be used to make more nuanced clinical decisions. In complicated scenarios with several comorbidities or opposing treatment options, AI-supported analysis can shed light on alternatives, which would have otherwise been unknown.

A promising field of application is that of predictive analytics. Longitudinal data of patients can be analyzed with machine learning models and used to predict progression of diseases, response to treatment, and risk of complications. These capacities allow preventative intervention measures and more sensible shared decision-making among clinicians and patients. The transition to predictive and not reactive models of care can cause a paradigm shift in the history of oral health outcomes, both on a personal and population scale.

Potential Problems and pitfalls.

Even with these encouraging trends, any form of AI implementation in dental practice calls into question significant questions requiring careful professional consideration. The liability, accountability, and professional responsibility questions in AI-assisted care are yet to be answered [5]. In cases where the AI system is a cause of diagnostic error or inappropriate choice of treatment, the distribution of the blame among the clinician, developer of the technology, and the healthcare facility is to be clarified. Governance systems are changing to accommodate these issues, but professional bodies have a role to play in developing governance frameworks that will safeguard the patients and practitioners.

These are equally important implications in dental education. Graduates should be trained not only to apply AI tools efficiently but also to analyze the results critically and see their shortcomings, as well as to uphold the basic clinical skills without technological support [6]. Skill atrophy in other areas that are increasingly being replaced by automated systems is a valid issue that needs to be tackled by educational institutions through its curriculum. The professions of the future in the field of dentistry will have to acquire hybrid skills that combine both the conventional clinical knowledge and data literacy and algorithmic knowledge.

Ethics of AI in dentistry are not limited to the liability and include ethical concerns of equity, access, and autonomy of patients. Systems based on AI which are primarily trained on information about certain groups might not work as well with underrepresented populations, which can further worsen current healthcare disparities [7]. In order to be fair in implementing AI, it is crucial that the creation of AI should involve different datasets and be thoroughly tested on the population categories. Moreover, patients need to realize when the AI is involved in their care and maintain a significant influence in the decision-making about treatment, which will require open communication regarding the role of intelligent systems in clinical practice.

Economic and Practice Implication.

Economic aspects of the implementation of AI in the dental practice should be considered as well. Although

advocates highlight the possibility of improvements in efficiency and better diagnostic options, costs of implementation, training, and maintenance can pose a barrier to smaller practices, whereby they can become more concentrated in the large institutional environments. The mechanisms of democratizing access to beneficial AI technologies need to be taken into account by professional organizations and policymakers in a continuum of practice settings.

The Human Dimension

Perhaps the most essential, the introduction of AI into dental practice provokes the question of the fundamentality of the dentist-patient relationship. The therapeutic relationship of the clinician and the patient includes the aspects of trust, empathy and human connection that are not algorithmically reproduced [8]. The uniquely human factors of the dental profession might become especially important as AI takes on more and more technical care tasks. The caring physician who listens to the patient, clarifies and shows sincere interest about the wellbeing of the patient adds value to the patient that goes beyond the correctness of diagnosis or technical faultlessness.

There is the danger of excess dependence on the technological systems that should be considered. Clinicians should exercise a high level of caution regarding AI recommendations, as algorithms, even the most advanced ones, act within specific parameters and can be unable to consider the contextual factors that can be evident only via human decision-making. The best model is one that places AI as a supplement instead of a replacement of clinical reasoning, where the final responsibility of making decisions regarding patient care is left to the practitioner.

Conclusion

The AI age also offers dentistry with the best chance to improve the accuracy of diagnosis, treatment, and practice efficiency. The existing technologies and the new ones that will be introduced in the future have the potential of monitoring disease earlier, arranging treatment in a more accurate manner, predicting outcome more reliably, and providing care in a more consistent manner than it was possible without the support of unaided human effort.

Yet, to achieve these advantages without losing the humanistic principles of dental care, it will be necessary to consider the integration of intelligent technologies carefully so that it becomes the addition and not the substitute of clinical knowledge. The AI will not make the dental practitioner of tomorrow obsolete but it will provide them with tools that will help to enlarge perceptual skills, decrease cognitive load, and make more informed decisions.

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