

Comparing Post-Operative Instructions following Dental Extractions: Bristol and Nepal

In Summer 2018 we travelled to Nepal to volunteer with the Moving Mountains Trust, delivering free dental care as part of a two-week medical camp. We also conducted part of our elective project here, aiming to answer the question: *“A comparison of the post-operative instructions given in the Oral Surgery department at Bristol Dental Hospital and Bumburi and Bupsa Medical/Dental Camps in Nepal following simple extractions, considering the evidence underpinning these instructions.”*

Following a day's Jeep ride and two days trekking, we reached the first village of Bupsa, in the Himalayan foothills, where we wasted no time in setting up the makeshift dental clinic in a tent.



Here, we spent a week treating a range of patients; the most frequent treatment was extractions, closely followed by scaling. Some teeth were temporised, awaiting endodontic therapy in Kathmandu if the patients were prepared to make the journey. We were struck by the primitive nature of the portable scaler, drill and dental chair, which were carried up the mountain by porters. We saw lots of interesting cases which we might not otherwise see in the UK, including the sectioning away of a denture in a lady who had the denture wired in over her natural dentition years ago.



At the end of our week in Bupsa the villagers hosted a farewell party for us, after which we walked for half a day to the next village of Bumburi. Here we were again welcomed with warm Nepalese hospitality.



The clinic in Bumburi was more established, the building having been built in 2016 with money raised by the Moving Mountains Trust. Here, the charity employs a nurse all year round to oversee treatment of medical needs of the villagers. Still, the need for medical and dental treatment was evident from the queues of villagers and those from surrounding areas, some of whom had trekked for days and waited patiently to be seen by volunteers.

Although the clinic had more amenities than the tent in Bupsa, hand-washing facilities were basic and during busy periods we made use of cold chemical sterilisation techniques.



Our Results

Our study gave a good initial insight into the differences in post-operative instructions following the simple extraction of teeth in two centres.

Whilst the instructions given at BDH have a strong scientific evidence base supporting them, it was interesting to see that social and anecdotal factors influenced Nepalese instructions.

For example, whereas BDH patients are advised to avoid alcohol for 24 hours, and smoking for at least a week, patients in the Bumburi and Bupsa clinics were told to abstain from both for one week. According to the supervising Nepalese dentist, Dr Santosh Dharel, this is due to the tendency of Asian patients to smoke each time they consume alcohol.

Furthermore, patients in Nepal were not advised to return on symptoms of dry socket. The supervising dentist explained that Nepalese patients are unlikely to follow preventative advice if they are given a curative option upfront. For example, if patients are advised to return if they get dry socket symptoms, patients often continue to smoke if they are given this option. If they are given no curative option, the dentist felt they were more likely to follow the post-operative instructions.

Conclusion

The experience with the Moving Mountains Trust in Nepal was an unforgettable one. Although the camps were basic compared to the comforts of home, we were touched by the warm hospitality with which the villagers received us. The experience has opened our minds to similar charity dentistry in the future.

During our time at the medical camps in Bumburi and Bupsa, we felt we met many academic and personal objectives. We found that we were able to adapt well to the contrast in working environment at BDH and also able to improvise when things didn't go to plan. We feel like these newfound skills are transferable to our clinical work on patients in BDH and our future careers.

Overall, we had a fantastic time during our elective and are so grateful for the contribution from the BDAA which helped with our travel expenses.

Many thanks for your support,
Claudia Lever and Ella Holden

