

## Short Communication

### HIGHLIGHTS ON THE PRACTICE OF ORAL PIERCINGS IN SUDAN

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#### ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, the custom of oral piercing has been practised in Sudan, and it was more common among the Nuba tribes. Recently, it has become more widespread among the youths. The exact reasons for the increasing number of piercings are difficult to enumerate, perhaps an imitation of public figures or an artist or may be a way for self-expression. It was reported that piercing is associated with wide range of local or systemic complications that could sometimes cause a life threatening conditions. Furthermore, the oral hygiene is expected to worsen after the execution of piercing. A strategic education program should be implemented by Dentists among the community in order to prevent the possible complications and maintain optimum oral health.

**Keywords:** oral piercing, Sudan, complications, dentist.

#### INTRODUCTION

The habit of oral piercings is particularly common in certain populations in Africa and South America. In Sudan the tribe of Nuba have been practising piercing for a long time. Nowadays it is prevalent among the youth community as a way of expressing themselves and showing their liberty. [1] 'Tongue piercing: a new fad in body art' was the first article discussing the issue of oral piercing in 1992. [2] Jewellery's application to the lips, cheeks, uvula, frenulum and tongue is becoming trendy with the hoops, studs or barbells as the popular forms of Jewellerys. The lips and Tongue are considered to be the most common locations for piercing application [3]. Oral piercing sounds as a harmless procedure yet it can be associated with serious local and even systemic complications. Skills and knowledge of the anatomy of the piercings' site is essential for avoidance of hazards.[4] Gold, stainless steel, titanium and silver are some of the used metals which require certain infection control and sterilization protocol to be maintained [5] The American Dental Association ADA considers the practice of piercings both orally and oro-facially as being traumatic and invasive without carrying certain benefits to subjects. [1] This commentary aims to raise the awareness of the community, especially the youth, about the practice of piercing and to discuss its associated risks and complications. Furthermore to state the dentist's role in increasing knowledge of patients and their education about the potential dangers of piercings.

#### Oral hygiene

Studies confirmed that oral piercing is potentially associated with deterioration of oral hygiene; patients usually experienced difficulty in piercing site's cleaning which leads to plaque accumulation, Tartar formation and thus inflammation. [6,7] A study reported the signs of generalised gingivitis in about 42% of the study participants, 20% with gingival recession and 52.8% with deteriorated oral hygiene. Playing with piercing jewellery was reported to cause tooth fracture due to the continuous hitting on the teeth. [7]

#### PIERCING COMPLICATIONS

The complications of the piercing may be classified according to the time of occurrence to:

- **Postoperative** (acute) happens directly after the piercing procedure. The patient may experience the following: oedema and pain of the tongue, metal's allergy, continuous bleeding from the piercing site, infection orally, speech alteration, impairment of food chewing and swallowing, hyper salivation and formation of current between the metal and tooth restoration. [8,9]
- **Long term** (chronic) happens after a long period of time. Direct trauma to the teeth, tongue or gingiva, local tissue hypertrophy, ingestion of the jewellery, acquirement of certain systemic diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B, Tetanus, Tuberculosis, syphilis, toxic shock syndrome, Bacterial endocarditis, the infection of the tongue leads to development of secondary infection and cerebral brain abscess and Ludwig's angina. Gingival recession can also result from lip piercing. [9,10]

#### Oral piercing In Sudan

Lip piercing, nose ring and body scarification are famous among some cultures in Africa; it's a prevalent practice among the Nuba of Sudan. [11] In the last two decades, the youth in Sudan headed for piercing the lip, nose and eyebrow, which are women's cosmetic trends in our community. The spread of piercing recently could be attributed to the fact that the world has become a small village because of the Internet; adolescents and young adults are influenced by Africans, famous artists, and stars of Arab and Western societies.[12]

The spread of piercings practice and the establishment of special centres that promote and provide this service; has sparked a lot of controversy in the society. Some put the blame on the family, which they believe has abdicated many of its roles, in specific word the supervision within the family, without which many values, customs and traditions have disappeared.[12]

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## DENTIST ROLE IN PATIENT'S AWARENESS

The role of the dentist is to educate the patients about the possible complications after the placement of the oral piercing, moreover to teach them methods of prevention and treatment. Furthermore, advising patients to seek dentist's consultation whenever symptoms appear.[13] Bad oral hygiene is an ideal environment for bacterial growth in the oral cavity; specifically the piercing's site; which is likely to be retentive to plaque and thus causing inflammation. Teaching methods of piercing's site cleaning, jewel's disinfection and maintaining proper oral hygiene are major dentist's roles. [7, 13]

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 During the execution of piercing optimum hygienic rules should be considered together with good knowledge of the anatomy to ensure patients safety. [14]
- 2 Patients should be committed to the post-operative instruction and extra care should be given to keeping the piercing clean.[13]
- 4 Healing process may be compromised by alcohol use, caffeine and smoking, so they must be avoided for one week after the procedure.[9]
- 5 Acrylic balls are more safe than metallic and their use can reduce the risk of trauma inside the oral cavity also some cytotoxic ions from metals are released to oral tissue.[15]
- 6- After execution of piercing by 2-3 weeks; downsizing jewellery's length is recommended for avoiding its contact with the teeth and gum. [9]
- 7- Following Surgical procedures orally; the jewellery should be removed so that it doesn't cause impairment of tissue's healing. [16]
- 8- Regular follow up will help in recognizing any potential complications. [9]

## CONCLUSION

The custom of oral piercing has been practiced in Sudan a long time ago, and recently it has become a fashion trend and method of self-expression among the youth. Public education about piercing's complications is mandatory. Further studies exploring the knowledge and practice of piercing in Sudan are needed.

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All authors read and approve the final manuscript

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