DENTAL TRIAGE

ASSESSING AND TREATING THE TRUE DENTAL EMERGENCY
What constitutes a dental emergency?
What does the patient call an emergency?
What does the patient call an emergency?

- Pain
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- Swelling
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- Lost Filling
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- Loose Tooth, Crown, or Filling
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- Sensitivity to hot, cold, or sweets
- Broken Denture
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- Trauma – Knocked out a tooth/Chipped tooth
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- Anything else the patient believes should be ‘fixed’ NOW
How do we determine which is the ‘True’ emergency
Triage
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- It is a process used to determine the priority of a patient’s treatment based on the severity of their condition.
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2. Clinical staff knows what to expect when the patient arrives
3. Minimize the disruption the emergency may cause to the schedule
HOW DO WE EMPLOY TRIAGE IN OUR CLINICS?
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4. What issues may present during the triage process that may expose your clinic to liability claims

HOW DO WE EMPLOY TRIAGE IN OUR CLINICS?
Sample Triage

Patient Name __________   Date & Time_________  Appt __________

Acute Symptoms - See Today

___ Persistent pain
___ Acute pain unresponsive to pain meds
___ Keeps patient awake/wakes at night
___ Prolonged reaction to hot, cold, pressure
___ Swelling or fever
___ Broken tooth with above symptoms
___ Recent surgery with persistent bleeding, pain, or other complication
___ Trauma, recent
___ Avulsed Tooth
___ Pain of 7 or above
Sample Triage

Urgent Symptoms - See in 1-4 days

___ Intermittent pain
___ Relieved by pain med
___ No sleep disturbance due to pain
___ Sensitivity to hot/cold less than 30 secs
___ Lost filling/broken tooth with little discomfort
___ Intermittent bleeding or loose tooth/teeth
___ Lump, bump, sore, or discoloration in or around mouth
___ Pain of 5-6
Sample Triage

**Dental Irritation - See within 2 weeks**
- Broken tooth/lost filling - no pain
- Intermittent pain, bothersome
- Responds quickly to pain med
- Chronic pain, not acute
- Started a while ago
- Patient doesn't mind waiting
- Pain below 4
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4. Be sure to provide clear contact information to the patient in the event they require post-op care. Document in the chart that the contact information was given to the patient.
How Do I Fit Emergencies in My Schedule?

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- Other ideas?
What Do I Do When Triage Doesn’t Work?
ISOLATE THE PROBLEM
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• Time management or Scheduling?
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• Screening Problems?
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• Individual Patient Issues?
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• Other?
SOURCE: WHO OR WHAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM?
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• Clinical facility issues
• Managing of staff schedules (vacation, travel, sick time)
• Triage technique issues -
SOLUTIONS?
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• Staff education / re-evaluation
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• Increase the number of providers or staff
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• Increase the number of providers or staff
• Improve or enlarge the clinical facility
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- Staff education / re-evaluation
- Increase the number of providers or staff
- Improve or enlarge the clinical facility
- Do a PDSA study of your triage technique
Discussion