Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office: Recognition and Management

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Medical emergencies can occur unexpectedly in dental settings, even during routine procedures. Dentists and their teams must be prepared to rapidly recognize and manage these events to ensure patient safety and positive outcomes. This course provides a practical, evidence-based overview of the most common medical emergencies encountered in dental offices, including syncope, hypoglycemia, allergic reactions, asthma exacerbations, seizures, and cardiovascular events. Participants will review risk assessment strategies, early warning signs, and step-by-step management protocols that can be implemented immediately in a clinical setting. Emphasis will also be placed on emergency preparedness, proper use of emergency drugs and equipment, team communication, and simulation-based response planning. By strengthening clinical decision-making and emergency readiness, this course aims to increase confidence among dental professionals in effectively managing medical emergencies until advanced medical care becomes available.

Learning Objectives:

1. **Identify** the most common medical emergencies that may occur in a dental office setting.
2. **Recognize** early signs and symptoms of life-threatening medical conditions during dental treatment.
3. **Perform** an appropriate primary assessment.
4. **Implement** evidence-based management protocols for common emergencies such as syncope, stroke, heart attack, hypoglycemia, allergic reactions, asthma, and seizures.

5. **Utilize** essential emergency medications and equipment commonly found in dental office emergency kits.
6. **Develop** an effective office emergency response plan that includes team roles, communication, and coordination with emergency medical services.

Sampada Deshpande DDS, FACD practices in San Mateo, CA. Due to her specialized training, she is consistently approached for care by patients with Special Health Care Needs (SHCNs) and/or medical complexities. Author of the book, Persevering, Sampada earned a DDS from the University of Washington and completed a GPR at Alameda Health System.
Sampada lectures nationally on treating patients with SHCN's in a private practice setting and using portable dentistry. Her writing on this topic and others has been featured in the American Dental Association, Academy of General Dentistry and Dental Economics. She is currently building a family first dental practice in San Carlos, CA, which will also offer sedation services. She lives with her husband and children in the Bay Area.