

Texas Dental Industry

Dr. Christopher Wilson, Dentist in Midland Texas: My practice has so far lost roughly 1000 hours of patient contact as a result of the shutdowns imposed on the dental industry.

Shutdown Impact:

This leads to missed opportunities to diagnose and treat active disease from cavities to oral cancer that will lead to much more urgent situations. Based on the data, firms like mine could miss these diagnoses for some of our patients.¹

The shut down policies are estimated to cost my practice over \$300,000 in revenue. In addition, the increased cost to stay open—including for ineffective PPE and redundant cleaning requirements—must be passed directly to patients in many practices, increasing costs by \$10-\$20 per appointment.²

The closure of the Texas schools is further handcuffing practices. It has placed my employees with young children in a difficult position, caught between caring for their kids or coming to work. I have been forced to cancel treatment of patients due to a lack of available staff as two of my staff members have been directly impacted.

Impact on Texans:

The continuation of mask requirements is contributing to a decline in the oral health of patients, including an increase in bacterial formation, halitosis, build-up of cavity causing bacteria, and plaque build-up that exacerbates periodontal health issues. In some practices, up to 50% of patients are being adversely impacted.³

The imposed mandates have also caused anxiety in many patients, leading to an increase in the number of teeth fractures my peers and I are seeing due to anxiety induced bruxism. These fractures are causing more tooth extractions and major repairs. I have sent five patients for extraction and/or root canals due to fracture in the past two weeks alone.⁴

Further, these mandates are leading to more people coming in seeking help with debilitating head, neck and jaw pain which are all directly correlated to increased anxiety and stress. According to a 2013 article in the American Journal of Infection Control, “researchers reported that long-term use of N95s during the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak was associated with an increased frequency of headaches and physical discomfort.” This same damage is being seen in our children as well.⁵

¹Cancer Treatment Centers of America on Oral Cancer Diagnosis <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/research/data-statistics/oral-cancer/incidence>

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/dentists-extract-new-fee-patients-keep-rising-covid-19-costs-n1221256>

³<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/mask-mouth-dentists-warn-prolonged-use-of-masks-leading-to-poor-oral-hygiene>

⁴ *Ibid.*, and “Correlation between symptoms and external cracked tooth characteristics: findings from the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5376224/>

⁵ *Ibid.*, and (6) “Psychosocial Predictors of Bruxism” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6815662/>, and “The surgical mask is a bad fit for risk reduction” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4868614/>