



JOURNAL of FORENSIC ODONTO- STOMATOLOGY

VOLUME 31 Supplement 1 October 2013
Abstract book IOFOS Conference 2013 Firenze

DENTAL RITUAL MUTILATIONS

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Objective: Dental ritual mutilations have occurred throughout history in human populations around the world. This library-based research shows the epidemiology and the type of dental mutilations, the meanings, the risks and techniques involved, and their consequences. **Design:** A review of the literature from early 1960s, on dental ritual mutilation in the world. **Methods:** Journal articles on search engines like PubMed, Scopus, Google and their bibliography. **Results:** Dental mutilations are performed today in rural community or indigenous tribes in several areas of the world, most notably in Africa, Asia, Oceania. The intentional dental ritual modification or mutilation can be done for many reasons such as aesthetic, tribal identification, sexual purposes and curious others. Their consequences are often underestimated, especially if there is a change in the cultural environment due to immigration. **Conclusions:** The ideas about teeth are culturally determined. Intentional dental mutilation is a practice that can be seen in virtually all societies throughout history. Dental mutilations, for the people that follow these practices, may be viewed as a source of pride or as a mean to help the identifying with the group to which they belong or as attractive of the opposite sex. By looking at both the cultural conformity and the costly signaling theory, it becomes evident why dental mutilation has occurred for such a vast amount of time and will continue to occur. The presence of dental ritual mutilations can be important, for the forensic dentist, in order to identify the ethnic origins and the cultural background of living or dead persons or even human remains.

KEYWORDS: Forensic Odontology, Identification, Dental mutilation

JFOS. October 2013, Vol.31, Sup.No.1 Pag 161
ISSN :2219-6749