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INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN MODERN DENTISTRY: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Adiba Iskandarova
Master's Student, 1st Year, Faculty of Dentistry,
Urgench State University, Urgench, Uzbekistan
Feruzbek Khaitboyev
Undergraduate Student, 3rd Year, Faculty of Dentistry,
Urgench State University, Urgench, Uzbekistan
Corresponding author: adibaiskandarova49@gmail.com

Abstract: The integration of information technologies into dentistry has revolutionized every aspect of oral healthcare — from diagnosis and treatment to education and patient management. Digital systems such as intraoral scanners, 3D cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), and CAD/CAM manufacturing have dramatically improved accuracy, predictability, and patient satisfaction. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms are increasingly applied to radiographic image analysis, caries detection, and treatment planning. Moreover, electronic health records (EHR) and tele-dentistry are enabling more efficient and inclusive healthcare delivery. Virtual and augmented reality technologies are redefining dental education, offering immersive and realistic training experiences. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the applications, advantages, and challenges of digital technologies in modern dentistry, while discussing future innovations that will continue to transform clinical practice.

Introduction

Dentistry has undergone a remarkable evolution over the past two decades due to the rapid advancement of digital technologies. Traditionally, dental procedures relied heavily on manual impressions, two-dimensional imaging, and analog tools. However, the shift toward digital workflows has introduced a new era characterized by precision, efficiency, and minimally invasive treatment.

The growing field of digital dentistry encompasses various technologies — from 3D imaging and computer-aided design to artificial intelligence and robotics. This transformation is not only reshaping how dentists diagnose and treat patients but also how dental professionals are trained and how patients engage in their own care.

Globally, digitalization in healthcare is driven by the need for accuracy, speed, and data integration. The dental sector has been among the first to adopt these innovations, as oral health procedures often require millimeter-level precision. Today, technologies such as CBCT, intraoral scanners, digital smile design (DSD), and AI-based diagnostic software are becoming standard components of dental clinics and laboratories worldwide.

Digital Diagnostics and Imaging

Digital diagnostics represent the foundation of modern dental practice. One of the most transformative tools in this field is cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), which provides

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three-dimensional visualization of hard and soft tissues with minimal radiation exposure. This allows dentists to evaluate bone density, tooth root morphology, and anatomical structures with exceptional clarity — crucial for procedures such as implant placement, endodontics, and orthodontic assessment.

Intraoral scanners (IOS) have replaced traditional impression materials, which were often uncomfortable for patients and prone to deformation. With scanners like the *iTero, TRIOS, or Medit i700*, digital impressions are created in seconds and can be directly transferred to CAD/CAM systems for immediate design and fabrication.

Artificial intelligence plays a growing role in diagnostics, with software capable of detecting early-stage caries, apical lesions, or bone resorption in radiographs.
AI-driven systems analyze thousands of images to identify patterns that may not be visible to the human eye, thus supporting evidence-based clinical decisions.

Moreover, digital radiography allows instant image acquisition and manipulation, improving workflow efficiency and reducing environmental impact by eliminating chemical processing. The ability to share images digitally enhances interdisciplinary collaboration among specialists.

CAD/CAM and Digital Prosthodontics
The introduction of Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM) has revolutionized restorative and prosthetic dentistry. The CAD/CAM process involves three major stages: digital impression acquisition, computer-based restoration design, and automated fabrication using milling machines or 3D printers.

This technology allows the creation of crowns, inlays, veneers, and implant abutments with micrometer precision. The digital workflow ensures superior fit, aesthetics, and biocompatibility. The materials used in CAD/CAM — such as zirconia, lithium disilicate, and hybrid ceramics — combine strength with translucency, closely mimicking natural tooth structure.

In addition, chairside CAD/CAM systems enable same-day restorations, reducing patient visits and increasing efficiency. The CEREC system, for example, allows clinicians to scan, design, and deliver a crown in a single appointment. Digital prosthodontics also improves communication between clinicians and dental technicians through standardized data sharing, ensuring consistency and accuracy across every stage of the process.

Furthermore, additive manufacturing (3D printing) is gaining prominence in producing surgical guides, orthodontic models, and custom prosthetic frameworks. This innovation significantly reduces waste and production time while increasing design freedom.

Tele-Dentistry and Electronic Health Records (EHR)
Tele-dentistry has emerged as a powerful tool for increasing access to dental care, particularly in remote or underserved regions. Through video consultations, image sharing, and remote diagnostics, patients can receive professional guidance without physical visits. This is especially valuable for follow-up appointments, preventive care, and initial assessments.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, tele-dentistry played a crucial role in maintaining oral healthcare continuity, proving its long-term value in modern practice. Studies have shown that remote monitoring systems can effectively track orthodontic progress or post-surgical healing using AI-based image analysis.

Electronic Health Records (EHR) complement tele-dentistry by integrating all patient data — radiographs, treatment history, prescriptions, and laboratory results — into a unified digital platform. This promotes better continuity of care, reduces administrative errors, and facilitates research through big data analysis.

The combination of EHR and tele-dentistry reflects the broader trend toward smart healthcare systems, where patient information is securely accessible to authorized professionals anytime, anywhere. However, maintaining data privacy and cybersecurity remains a critical challenge that must be addressed through international standards and encryption technologies.

Dental Education and Simulation Technologies

Digital transformation is equally reshaping dental education. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) provide students with immersive environments to practice procedures without risk. Haptic simulators reproduce the tactile sensations of drilling, cutting, and scaling, offering realistic feedback and improving manual dexterity.

Institutions are increasingly adopting digital learning platforms and 3D anatomy visualization tools, enabling students to explore oral structures interactively. These methods complement traditional teaching, enhance engagement, and allow repeated practice — something not always feasible in clinical settings.

Moreover, AI-based assessment systems can analyze a student's technique and provide personalized feedback, ensuring objective and data-driven evaluation of clinical competencies.

The future of digital dentistry lies in the integration of AI, robotics, and bioengineering. Researchers are currently developing robot-assisted implant placement systems capable of performing high-precision surgeries. In addition, bioprinting technologies are being explored for fabricating living tissues, such as gingiva and bone scaffolds, using patient-derived stem cells.

Predictive analytics based on large patient datasets will soon enable personalized treatment planning and early disease detection. Furthermore, blockchain technology could play a vital role in secure data management, ensuring transparency and interoperability among healthcare systems.

Conclusion

Digital technologies are redefining the boundaries of modern dentistry. From improved diagnostics and efficient workflows to patient-centered communication and advanced education tools, the benefits are undeniable. As digital tools become increasingly integrated into dental practice, practitioners must develop strong technological competencies alongside clinical

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expertise. The successful adoption of these innovations promises a future of safer, faster, and more personalized dental care worldwide.

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