



SHORT COMMUNICATION

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Commentary on the article 'Understanding Muslim patients: cross-sectional dental hygiene care'

Abstract: I have read with interest the article "Understanding Muslim patients: cross-sectional dental hygiene care" by ML Sirois *et al.* In the time that I see their article as a faithful, unbiased image showing a Muslim's religious life and conduct from the oral and systemic health perspective, I still have two main concerns about certain facts which were denoted with imprecise connotations. These are related to food and Ramadan fasting.

Key words: commentary; Muslim patients; precise terms

Dear Editor,

I have read with interest the article 'Understanding Muslim patients: cross-sectional dental hygiene care' by ML Sirois *et al* (1). In the time that I see their article as a faithful, unbiased image showing a Muslim's religious life and conduct from the oral and systemic health perspective, I still have two main concerns about certain facts which were denoted with imprecise connotations.

First, in Table 4 (page 111), the authors have included animal fats among the forbidden (*haram*) Category of food in Islam while, in fact, only pork fat is prohibited; other types of animals' fats are not haram. On the other hand, the authors could have added a reference to support their statement.

However, they have again included it among the allowed category as the last item in the same table; a contradictory depiction that should be corrected.

Secondly, as to the time of fasting in Ramadan, the fasting time starts from dawn (and not sunrise, as stated in some parts of the text) to sunset (and not dusk). There is usually a lapse of around one hour and half between dawn at (or just before) which Muslims should start their fasting, and sunrise.

Dictionaries define the word *dusk* as "the state or period of partial darkness between day and night (2); the dark part of twilight", which, apparently, points to a state of darkness after sunset. In fact, a Muslim can break his/her fasting immediately after sunset.

Preciseness of terms used in articles discussing peoples' beliefs and culture is critical so that the truthful message is sent to the reader who might be reading the article from a medical/dental or even religious mindset.

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- 1 Sirois ML, Darby M, Tolle S. Understanding Muslim patients: cross-cultural dental hygiene care. *Int J Dent Hyg* 2013; **11**: 105.
- 2 Available at: www.dictionary.com (accessed 02 September 2014).

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