



Special Care Dentistry – How prepared are we?

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Introduction

- Recent literature suggests that undergraduate dental students may graduate with a lack of experience in SCD.
- Lack of knowledge, confidence or clinical experience may become a barrier to delivery of oral health care to patients requiring SCD.
- Increased student confidence in SCD may increase the likelihood of a General Dental Practitioner providing SCD in a community setting.

Background

- It is widely accepted that there is poor access to SCD at a global level.
- General practitioners often find this population too challenging to treat.
- It has been estimated that 90% of people requiring SCD could receive treatment in a local, primary care centre.
- Research has established that a correlation exists between undergraduate dental training and the treatment of patients requiring SCD upon graduation.
- Unfortunately, the worldwide provision of undergraduate education and teaching in SCD is inconsistent and under-reported.

Aims of the study

- ▶ Evaluate current confidence levels of Irish undergraduate dentistry, dental hygiene and dental nursing students in SCD.
- ▶ To determine whether students felt further SCD training is required at an undergraduate level.

Method

- A questionnaire was distributed amongst the undergraduate dental teams within Cork University Dental School and Hospital and Dublin Dental University Hospital.

Results

- A total 139 students participated in the study out of a potential of 204 students (response rate 68%).
- **Twenty-seven percent** (n = 30) agreed that their training has been sufficient in providing treatment/assistance under supervision for patients requiring SCD.
- **Seventy-five percent** of students agreed that more emphasis should be placed on clinical training in SCD (n = 76).
- **Thirty one percent** of students anticipated a high level of confidence in treating patients requiring SCD upon graduation (n = 43), with dental students feeling the least prepared and dental hygiene students the most prepared.

Discussion & Conclusions

- Confidence levels of the undergraduate dental team were low with regard to SCD.
- The existing hands-on clinical training in SCD was deemed insufficient.
- Students believed more emphasis should be placed on SCD training in the undergraduate curriculum.
- There have been some positive steps forward in Ireland regarding this issue.

Discussion & Conclusions (continued)

- Within the last year, an Ireland-wide strategy meeting was held to address these issues and the possibility of developing an Ireland wide core-teaching element for SCD was discussed.
- The International Association for Disability and Oral Health have been developing universal guidelines for SCD education at an undergraduate level and this guidance could help form these core teaching elements.
- Currently in the UK, the British Society for Disability and Oral Health have established a UK wide teaching group for SCD – this could perhaps be implemented in Ireland and may even encompass student representatives from the Irish dental schools.

Thank you for listening
Any questions?