



CHOOSING PUBLIC HEALTH DENTISTRY AS A CAREER: A CROSS- SECTIONAL STUDY

Dental Science

Dr. Sachendra Bharat	Post Graduate Student, Dept of Public Health Dentistry, K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura
Dr. D. J. Bhaskar	Prof and Head of Department, Dept of Public Health Dentistry, K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura
Dr. Navpreet Kaur	Reader, Dept of Public Health Dentistry, K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura
Dr. Ankita Bansal*	Private Practitioner, K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura *Corresponding Author
Dr. Amit	Post Graduate Student, Dept of Public Health Dentistry, K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura

ABSTRACT

Objective: Public Health Dentistry is considered as a knowledge based department and it is given less priority by the students as their choice in post-graduation, though it forms the basis of dental health care services and holds the key for developing awareness about the social aspects of the profession and the responsibility towards community. The aim of this study was to determine the factors that lead to the choice of public health dentistry as an occupation among the dental students in a private dental college.

Materials and Methods: The present cross-sectional based study was conducted among 50 BDS third year, 56 final year and 14 interns were taken as study subjects. Data was collected using a closed ended questionnaire. Statistical Analysis was performed using SPSS software for Windows, version 22 and data was analyzed using the Pearson Chi-square (χ^2) test.

Results: Out of 120 study subjects who asked whether they wish to choose Public Health Dentistry as subject in MDS, 22% 3rd year students responded no, 21% responded don't know and 7% responded yes; 34% final year students responded no, 18% responded don't know and 4% responded yes; 2% interns responded no, 4% responded don't know and 8% responded yes. Results were found to be highly statistically significant ($p=0.000$).

Conclusion: The present study concluded that there was an average attitude of dental students, which showed that they had a considerable amount of interest in pursuing post graduation in public health dentistry.

KEYWORDS

Career choice, public health dentistry and under graduates

INTRODUCTION

Dental education in India was established 91 years ago, when the first dental college was started in Calcutta by Dr. Ahmed in 1920. Currently, 292 DCI recognized Dental colleges exist with total intake capacity of around 25,000- 30,000 students per year (as per the information provided on the official website of DCI).¹ Correspondingly, the number of Dental Surgeons in the country has also increased from few hundreds to almost 80,000. There is about 3.5 times increase in the population since then and number of dentists has increased more than 3,000 times.²

Destiny is decided! No doubt about it but the almighty has given us wisdom and knowledge to share and apply in a particular circumstance. All the students entering the dental profession can be divided into two categories-"Dentistry by choice", where they were interested in taking up the profession, and "Dentistry by chance", where they were forced to take up the profession. Many factors may enter into deciding on a career choice.³ These include factors ease of employment, being self-employed, working regular hours, followed by an opportunity of good income, and the opportunity to help people.⁴ The choice of career is a critical discussion that has an obvious impact on future life pattern. In a study conducted by Naidu et al. most of study participants favoured Conservative dentistry and Endodontics, Orthodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Pedodontics and Periodontics as their choice. Similarly, in Nigeria, students' preferences were more towards the clinical specialties, while Dental Radiology, Dental Anaesthesia, Dental Public Health and Oral Medicine were not considered at all by the students. Among the various disciplines of dentistry in India, Public Health Dentistry is considered as a non clinical department and it is given less priority by the students as their choice in post-graduation, though it forms the basis of dental health care services and holds the key for developing awareness about the social aspects of the profession and the responsibility towards community.⁷ In order to operate a meaningful and balanced oral health care delivery system and maintain standards in dental education, it is essential that all aspects of dentistry be adequately staffed at the specialist cadre.⁵ Previous studies have found that students attend dental school because they wish to be independent, serve others, work

with their hands, acquire social status and/or financial security, be upwardly socially mobile, and have a flexible work schedule.⁶ Women have been found to choose dentistry because they believe they will be able to balance effectively their personal and professional lives as dentists.⁷

The 1980s to early 1990s were fairly good for public health educational institutions, showing a slow, but steady increase in student enrollment (Katz, 2000). It appears that there are numerous factors that influence students in their decision to choose a particular career and to choose a particular educational institution.⁸ Dentistry in India is currently being challenged to maintain its professional character.⁹ Keeping this in view, the present study was conducted to know the attitudes of dental students towards choosing Public Health Dentistry as their future career, which can help in establishing post- graduation courses in various Public Health Dentistry departments among existing universities.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess knowledge and awareness regarding subject of public health dentistry among BDS third year, final year students and interns.
2. To evaluate attitude of regarding subject of public health dentistry among BDS third year, final year students and interns.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A closed ended questionnaire based, cross-sectional study was conducted over a period of two days, among 120 undergraduate dental students. Out of these 120 under graduates, 50 BDS third year, 56 BDS final year and 14 interns were taken as study subjects of K. D. Dental College and hospital, Mathura who gave their consent to participate in the study were included. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee of K.D. Dental College and Hospital, Mathura.

METHODS OF COLLECTION OF DATA

Data was collected using a closed ended questionnaire comprising of 26 questions regarding knowledge and attitude about public health

dentistry subjects. Questionnaire was distributed to students during class hours for each year, with prior permission from Dean of the Institution. Subjects those who were not present on the day of study were excluded.

DESCRIPTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

A self-administered, multiple-choice type study questionnaire was administered to each participant in person, who took approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised questions of knowledge and attitude among BDS third year, BDS final year and interns about subject of public health dentistry. Socio-demographic data included questions on age, gender, and years of study. Pretesting of the questionnaire was carried out to assure that all the questions were clear and understandable to the participants. The questionnaire was filled by each subject in the presence of a well-trained examiner. Statistical Analysis was done using SPSS version 22 and data was analyzed using the Pearson Chi-square (χ^2) test with the level of significance set as $p \leq 0.05$.

RESULTS

Out of 120 study subjects, 50 (41.7%) were 3rd year students, 56 (46.7%) were final year students and 14 (11.7%) students were interns. [Table no. 1].

Out of 120 study subjects who asked whether they wish to choose Public Health Dentistry as subject in MDS, 22% 3rd year students responded no, 21% responded don't know and 7% responded yes; 34% final year students responded no, 18% responded don't know and 4% responded yes; 2% interns responded no, 4% responded don't know and 8% responded yes. Results were found to be highly statistically significant ($p=0.00$). [Table no. 2].

Out of 120 study subjects asked whether they think that the subject of Public Health Dentistry may be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered easy employment, 32% 3rd year students responded no, 32 % responded don't know and 36 % responded yes; 25% final year students responded no, 33% responded don't know and 41% responded yes; 21.4% interns responded no, 42.9% responded don't know and 37.5% responded yes. Results were found to be statistically significant ($p=0.01$). [Table no. 3].

Out of 120 study subjects asked whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality pay is better than the other branches 28% 3rd year students responded no, 42 % responded don't know and 30 % responded yes; 21.4% final year students responded no, 50% responded don't know and 28.6% responded yes; 14.3% interns responded no, 28.6% responded don't know and 57.1% responded yes. Results were found to be no statistically significant ($p=0.06$). [Table no. 4].

Out of 120 study subjects asked whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered a challenging job 8% 3rd year students responded no, 46 % responded don't know and 46 % responded yes; 26.8% final year students responded no, 37.5% responded don't know and 37.5 % responded yes, 14.3% interns responded no, 35.7 % responded don't know and 50 % responded yes. Results were found to be statistically significant ($p=0.01$). [Table no. 5].

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was found that out of 120 study subjects 50 (41.7%) were 3rd year students, 56 (46.7%) were final year students and 14 (11.7%) were internship students. However, in study conducted by Guntipalli M. Naidu et al.², it was found that out of 293 study participants, 85 (29%) were first years, 60 (20.4%) were second years, 49 (16.7%) were third years, 56 (19.1%) were fourth years, 43 (14.6%) were interns.

In this present study, when study subjects were asked whether they wished to choose Public Health Dentistry as subject in MDS results were found to be statistically significant. However, in study conducted by Guntipalli M. Naidu et al.², results were statistically significant ($p=0.001$). In a study conducted by O.M. Arowojolu et al.⁵, results were statistically no significant ($p=0.06$).

In the present study when study subjects were asked whether they think that the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered easy employment, results were found to be no statistically significant. This was in accordance with the study conducted by Guntipalli M. Naidu et al.², in which

results were statistically significant ($p=0.000$). In a study conducted by O.M. Arowojolu et al.⁵, results were statistically no significant ($p=0.08$).

In our study, when study subjects were asked whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality pay was better than the other branches results were found to be no statistically significant. This was in accordance with the study conducted by Guntipalli M. Naidu et al.², in where results were statistically significant ($p=0.0000$). In a study conducted by O.M. Arowojolu et al.⁵, results were statistically no significant ($p=1.02$).

In the present study, when study subjects were asked whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered a challenging job and results were found to be no statistically significant. This was in accordance with the study conducted by Guntipalli M. Naidu et al.², in where results were statistically significant ($p=0.001$). In a study conducted by O.M. Arowojolu et al.⁵, results were statistically no significant ($p=0.68$).

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that there was an average attitude of 58% among dental students, which showed that they had a considerable amount of interest in pursuing post graduation in this specialty. Efforts should be intensified, both by dental council and by the dental colleges, to develop this specialty, keeping in mind the increasing attitude of dental undergraduates towards it. This also helps in increasing the number of dental personnel who are specialized in implementation of oral health policy, which does not exist in India. In the past one decade, Dental Council of India has made some efforts in establishing post-graduation in Public Health Dentistry, but these efforts should be intensified further, both by Dental council and dental colleges, to develop this specialty, keeping in mind the increasing preference of dental undergraduates towards it. This can also help in increasing the number of dental personnels who can play a major role in acceptance and implementation of National Oral Health Policy.

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects according to the years of study

Year of study	Number of study subjects	Percentage
Third year	50	41.7%
Final year	56	46.7%
Internship	14	11.7%
Total	120	100%

Table 2: Distribution of study subjects according to whether they wished to choose Public Health Dentistry as subject in MDS

Year of study	Response of study subjects		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Third year	7 %	22 %	21 %
Final year	4 %	34 %	18 %
Internship	8 %	2 %	4 %

$p = 0.000^*$

Table 3: Distribution of study subjects according to whether they think that the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered easy employment

Year of study	Response of study subjects		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Third year	36 %	32 %	32 %
Final year	41 %	25 %	33 %
Internship	35.7 %	21.4 %	42.9 %

$p = 0.01$

Table 4: Distribution of study subjects according to whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality pay is better than the other branches

Year of study	Response of study subjects		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Third year	30 %	28 %	42 %
Final year	28.6 %	21.4 %	50 %
Internship	57.1 %	14.3 %	28.6 %

$p = 0.06$

Table 5: Distribution of study subjects according to whether the subject of Public Health Dentistry might be chosen as a career option in M.D.S as the speciality offered a challenging job

Year of study	Response of study subjects		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Third year	46 %	8 %	46 %
Final year	35.7 %	26.8 %	37.5 %
Internship	50 %	14.3 %	35.7 %

p=0.01

REFERENCES

1. Jain H, Agarwal A. Current scenario and crisis facing dental college graduates in India. *J Health Res and Rev*.2014; 1(1): 15-20.
2. Naidu, G. M., Prasad, G. M., Kandregula, C. R., Babburi, S., & KVNR, P. (2014). Choosing Public Health Dentistry as a Career: A Cross-Sectional Study. *J Clin Diagn Res* 2014; 8(2):199-202.
3. Amith HV, D'Cruz AM, Jasil M, Mansor MM, Antony NA, Devi NG, Aziz NZ, Shetty SD. Career in dentistry: By choice or chance-reasons for choosing dentistry among the first-year dental students of a college in India. *J Orofac Sci* 2013;5:114-7.
4. Hallisey J, Hanningan A, Ray N. Reasons for choosing dentistry as a career — A survey of dental students attending a dental school in Ireland during 1998-99. *Eur J Dent Educ* 2000;4:77-81.
5. Arowojolu OM, Aderinokun GA, Arotiba JY, Dosumu OO. Choice of speciality training among Nigerian Dental graduates. *Odonto-Stomatologie Tropicale*. 1997:21-24.
6. Saeed M. Banabilh. Career decisions of undergraduate dental students at the University of Science and Technology, Yemen. *J Dent Educ*. 2013; 77 (3):331-6. 23.
7. Scarbez M, Ross JA. Gender differences in first-year dental students' motivation to attend dental school. *J Dent Educ*. 2002;66:952-61.
8. Teri S, Tamayose, Farzin Madjidi, June Schmieder-Ramirez, and Gail T. Rice. Important factors when choosing a career in Public Health. *Californian Journal of Health Promotion*. 2004;2 (1): 65-69.
9. Schwartz B, Bhan A. Professionalism and challenges in dental education in India. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* 2005;2(4):119-21.