

One to Hundred

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Abstract – Work in department of public health dentistry includes taking lectures and practical classes for the students, conducting regular health education and treatment camps, operating satellite clinics in rural areas and also to undertake research activities. It is therefore not difficult to realize the quantum of work being done by the department. However, dental council of India (DCI) has a different perspective. According to DCI, minimum staff requirement to run the department of public health dentistry is just one reader. Lets not fool anyone; it's not a fiction of imagination. We as professionals fail to understand that how can one faculty run the entire department activities inclusive of community and research work. Cynicism is not the answer. We need to find a very amicable solution to it. We as public health dentists still think things can change, but right kind of voices needs to be raised at the right platforms. It's a part of our professional duty and our responsibility towards our students and the people.

Keywords – Dental council of India; public health dentistry; dental public health; community Dentistry; critical issues in Indian dental education; policy issues in dental education

Commentary

Dentistry in India is a four year course with one year compulsory rotator internship.¹ Two hundred eighty nine dental schools in their full capacity produce approximately 25,000 dental graduates each year. Majority of the dental schools have an intake of 100 students each year. Public health dentistry is in third and final year curriculum. During internship/house job, dental students, have a posting in the department. The department work includes taking lectures and practical classes for the students, conducting regular health education and treatment camps, operating satellite clinics in rural areas and also to undertake research activities.

It is therefore not difficult to realise the quantum of work being done by the department. However, dental council of India (DCI) has a different perspective. According to DCI, minimum staff requirement to run the department of public health dentistry is just one reader; for other dental department's requirement being one professor, two readers and a senior lecturer. A professor is a faculty having eight years of experience after dental post graduation; reader is one having four years of experience and senior lecturer is a fresh pass out postgraduate dental student.¹

Lets not fool anyone; it's not a fiction of imagination. We as professionals fail to understand that how can one faculty run the entire department activities inclusive of community and research work. There is no justification for such kind of requirement as formulated by the council. Will not such acute shortage of department faculty have an influence on students teaching and academic performance? Staff shortage will also impinge on the community health programs and research activities of the department. In simple terms, the

functioning of the unit will be severely affected and we will have an underperforming department.

First step in solving a problem is the acknowledgement that it exists. The council needs to understand that a problem exists in the regulations concerning minimum faculty requirements. The problem needs to be rectified by bringing in line the minimum criteria requirement for all the dental departments. Rather than having a reactive approach we need to have a proactive view. We need to find a very amicable solution to it. If there is shortage of faculty then posts need to be created for at least one more senior lecturer/and or professor in the department of public health; or any other alternative arrangement as seems suitable. We cannot be silent spectators and marginalized professionals. Cynicism is not the answer. We as public health dentists still think things can change, but right kind of voices need to be raised at the right platforms. It's a part of our professional duty and our responsibility towards our students and the people.

References

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Vitae

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Dr. Abhinav Singh completed his dental graduation in 2004 and post graduation in 2008 from Manipal College of Dental Sciences, India; premiere dental school in India. He also completed a post graduate course in smile designing and aesthetic dentistry in 2006 -2007. Since then he has been involved in teaching dentistry to undergraduate and post graduate students. He has also been actively involved in scientific research and has numerous publications in both national and International Journal. He is the author of the speciality textbook "Trace Elements and Dental Caries". Presently working as an Assistant Professor in Department of Public Health Dentistry in ESIC Dental College & Hospital, Rohini, Under Ministry of Labour & Employment. He is a member and recipient of Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DEAS), member of Indian Association of Public Health Dentistry and has the fellowship from Academy of General Education, Manipal. He competed and cleared the National Board Dental Examination (NBDE), USA in 2009.

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