



Wide multidisciplinary rather than narrow subspecialty



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The world is fast moving into a sub-subspecialty era. In the medical and dental fields, we are teaching physicians and dentists to become more and more specialized in their specific fields. But does subspecializing mean understanding more about your own narrow field and less about the whole, wide picture? Does knowing more about a specific topic necessitate knowing less about the overall condition?

At least in dental medicine, the field is not too wide to be lost during subspecialty training. It is our duty, as educators in the specialty programs, to encourage and incorporate wide multidisciplinary understanding among our postgraduate, specialty students. The fact that a dentist is learning how to align teeth does not mean that he or she can no longer detect and diagnose caries. There is no reason that a resident in oral rehabilitation will ignore periodontal disease. Good skills in performing endodontic treatments should not mean poor detection of overhanging restoration margins.

Enabling and guiding our residents, in each field, to be exposed to multidisciplinary treatment planning, sharing knowledge between residents and instructors between the various disciplines, will not only improve their understanding of the profession, but will also help

them make wiser decisions about their own subspecialty. This is possible with combined seminars and treatment presentations, but not by these alone. It should also mean a joint treatment approach between the different disciplines' residents. Don't let the resident send the patient to endodontic consultation – have the resident escort the patient to this consultation and be an active part of it. Active multidisciplinary consultations will benefit all sides: the referring resident will learn about the other discipline's considerations and vice versa, while the patients will gain from better communication between the treating team members. Don't let the students decide on a treatment plan because "this is what the orthodontist recommended." Instead, make them understand why this was recommended and what the alternatives were in the specific case.

Education of our future specialists to see the whole picture and to understand more in all fields of the dental profession is possible, and will benefit the entire profession, not only our patient population.

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