

The pressing need to invest in our future generation



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Dental students, graduate and postgraduate, are the future of our profession. They will lead dentistry to new frontiers and they will treat us when we get old. As dental educators and leaders of dental education facilities, we have a responsibility to produce the best quality of dental professionals. But are we really doing whatever possible to make that happen? High-quality dental education starts with proper diagnosis, patient education, preventive measures suitable for the specific patient, and personally tailored treatment plan options, with state-of-the-art performance of the actual treatment plan followed by proper maintenance and follow-up. In order to teach all these steps in the best way, we need highly skilled teachers who remain available to the students during their clinical work. Proficient dental educators should be able to lead the student in the journey of treating each and every patient, providing a role model and a professional guide through all the steps, one by one.

But proficient and dedicated dental educators cost money! If we fail in attracting skilful, talented, enthusiastic, and capable dental professionals into our academic environment, we will be leading our future

generation to mediocrity rather than excellence. The fact that most of our graduates are not willing (or financially able) to commit to long-term full-time academic positions is very concerning. Relying solely on voluntary, part-time personnel, with limited commitment and almost no benefits or compensation, is not the right way to grow the next generation. It is an important addition and valuable contribution to the students, but a core of easily available, full-time, high-quality dental educators is essential for every graduate and postgraduate program. This is where the tuition money should be invested. The students deserve it in exchange for their tuition costs and effort, and we deserve it as their future patients.

We should encourage, as much as possible, our best graduates to become the future of dental education, and if that means more attractive salaries and benefits, then it must be provided. We owe it to our students, we owe it to our patients, we owe it to our profession, and we owe it to ourselves.

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