



International alignment of standards in dentistry: a dream?

Interdisciplinary dental treatment and collaboration between teams and different professionals are known practices in dentistry. However, what seems to be overlooked is the importance of aligning the standard of dental education, care, and practice at the international level.

Though almost every country has its dental education and licensure systems, the standards of care in terms of dental education and dental care are not on the same page worldwide. A patient might walk into a dental office in one country with a treatment done in a different country that is deemed inconsistent with the dental care and practice, thus creating practical and ethical dilemmas for the dental professional. A well-experienced dental professional in one country is not allowed to see patients in another, and dental schools differ dramatically in their curricula and the education they provide. The lack of standardization worldwide in dentistry leads to inconsistency between dental schools, dental licensure and regulation bodies, dental professionals, and between patients who receive treatments in different places. In order to create better alignment, more consistency, and better possible collaboration, international efforts should be made to initiate and form a worldwide accreditation and licensure institution that will hold high standards and provide guidance to local schools, boards, and governing bodies. The vision would be primarily establishing the ideal standard of health care in the dental field with respect to ethical, theoretical, and clinical criteria.

When referring to dental schools and accreditation processes, an international accreditation body will enable adherence to high and unified standards worldwide and will set a bar to look up to for dental educators. This will later help with alignment of treatment methods internationally and will create a better “one language” for dental professionals around the world. The unified accreditation process should be considered prestigious so it will be an incentive for dental schools to join and for student applicants to prefer schools that are internationally accredited. Graduating from an internationally accredited dental school will enable the dental professionals to be recognized outside of their home country and will be consid-

ered a desirable benefit when choosing an educational institution. The unified accreditation will help in alignment of the dental curriculum in dental schools around the world and will open avenues for more collaborations between schools, increased student and staff exchange, as well as easier migration of educators and professors. This, in turn, will strengthen the uniform approach, promote high standards, and increase the opportunities for exposure for dental students. This approach will also enhance research and continuous education collaboration opportunities and will help knowledge dissemination and sharing of clinical expertise.

Furthermore, creating a unified international licensure body will make it easier to maintain the same standards of dental care worldwide. This should help to create more equality in dental treatments and less “geographical discrimination” in terms of dental health and treatment quality. A unified international licensing system will make it easier to migrate as a dental professional since the license will be more transferable between countries. It will also make it easier to compare treatments and policies and provide information to governing authorities when discussing oral health policies. International licensure will enable better advocacy for dental health to the government, health care system, insurance companies, etc.

For the individual dental professional, making dentistry more unified worldwide will present a plethora of new opportunities for collaboration, consultation, and migration options. It will expand the ability to pursue continuing education in many shapes and formats including specialty programs and general practice residencies in other countries. It will also create international recognition of the degree and license and will make transfer of patients between countries smoother and more responsible.

At the patient level, an international effort to standardize dentistry would protect patients from dental complications when migrating or moving to different countries related to dental practitioners not familiar with certain treatment modalities, materials, or procedures. In addition, the unifying effort of an international license would draw patients’ attention

globally through media coverage and promote awareness of dental health issues as well as quality of care.

Overall, unifying dental education, practice, and governance might contribute to better provision of high-level dental care worldwide and to improving dialogues and understanding between dental professionals internationally. The logistics and political efforts to achieve it might seem impossible but if we work toward this vision step by step, we might be able to make this dream come true.

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