

Medicine and dentistry: Different entities?



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Historically, dentistry and medicine were two different academic degrees learned through separate routes. Medical students go through medical school, and only after achieving their MD degree do they choose their specialty. Dental students, however, skip the general medicine part and focus on dental issues, receiving their DDS/DMD degree. The question is, if this is still the appropriate format for both disciplines. Do dentists differ from ophthalmologists, dermatologists, and ENTs? Does a person who is about to extract a tooth from a patient on anticoagulants need a different background from the one who will excise a nevus or treat an ingrown nail?

Somehow dentists are being raised and educated to become “only dentists”; however, it is probably time to realize that dental education is not at all dissimilar from many other disciplines in medical practice. Having that

in mind, the background provided to dentists should not differ from the background provided to other medical doctors. The same way that urologists go through medical training and only then turn to urology might be applied to dental professionals.

As our patients become older and medically challenged due to the raise in life expectancy, as we further understand the influence of medications on dental treatments, as we know more about the relation between oral and systemic diseases, and as the options for dental treatment become wider and sometimes more invasive, we have to make sure our graduates are highly proficient and capable to deal with these cases.

Obviously, this is not an easy process and it requires a lot of work, thinking, faculty re-design, and paradigm shift; nevertheless, it seems that this should be the future direction of our profession.

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