

Exploring Sustainable Dental Healthcare Education in India: Mixed Method Study

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Introduction

Climate change and over exploitation of natural resources are one of the major global health threats of the 21st century. Our current health professional education system is falling short of preparing future students regarding this crisis, their roles today and in the future.

Aim of the study

This mixed method study intends to explore dental students' knowledge, awareness and curriculum towards SDH along with dental faculty perceptions, strategies of integration of sustainable dental healthcare (SDH) into existing dental curriculum.

Methodology

The anonymous survey using a close ended, novel and structured instrument consisting of four sections: demographics, environmental impact, current teaching and future teaching strategies was conducted among 250 clinical dental students. A structured in-depth interview guide was developed to understand the perception, current training, challenges and strategies for implementation in dental curriculum is being collected from 15 dental faculty from different specialities.

Results

Two hundred thirty-eight students completed the survey. 98% of participants believed that climate change is a concern and only 3.8% thought they have been formally taught what SDH is. 78.6% believe that future teaching should be incorporated in early years, with 31% of participants preferring a mix of offline and online modules along with field visits as the methods of teaching. The in-depth interview is currently ongoing and data shall be presented once completed.

Conclusion

India with 300+ Dental Colleges is training 30000+ dental graduates annually and need to reorient dental curriculum to incorporate SDH on an urgent basis. The future workforce has to be trained, aware, sensitive and professionally committed to reduce the environmental damage in dental practice.