EXPLORING SUSTAINABLE DENTAL HEALTHCARE EDUCATION IN INDIA: MIXED METHOD STUDY

INTRODUCTION:
Climate change and over exploitation of natural resources pose significant global health threats in 21st century. Our current healthcare professional education system is inadequately equipped to prepare future students for addressing this crisis and understanding their roles in mitigating its impact.

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:
Anonymous survey using a novel, close ended, & structured instrument consisting of four domains: demographics, environmental impact, current teaching and future teaching strategies was conducted among 250 clinical dental students in 3rd and 4th year.

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.

PILOT RESULTS:
- 238 students completed the survey
  - 98% of participants believed that climate change is a concern and only 3.8% thought they have been formally taught SDH.
  - Around 69.5% considered environmentally friendly strategies were expensive.
  - 78.6% believe that future teaching should be incorporated in early years,
  - 78% of participants preferring a mix of offline and online modules along with field visits and Guest Lectures as methods of teaching.
  - In-depth interview is in process and data will be presented later.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
India with 300+ Dental Colleges is training 30000+ dental graduates annually and need to reorient dental curriculum to incorporate SDH on an urgent basis.

Recommendations to Dental Council of India:
- Comprehensive and Experiential Learning structured, validated module for dental undergraduates in India.
- Module should start in early years and should include field visits, guest lectures and active participation of students.

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