Dental Practitioners' Views on Adequacy of Undergraduate Training in Dental Laboratory Technology

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The undergraduate curricula in dental schools worldwide are undergoing frequent and constant revisions. Decreasing edentulism and advances in technology have led to changes in patient management and treatment options available for general dental practitioners in Sri Lanka as well. Yet, the present undergraduate training program in removable prosthodontics of the Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya has seen little change in the past few years. As benchmark specifications are not available for teaching prosthodontics in Sri Lanka, the aim of the present study was to investigate the views of dental practitioners in Sri Lanka on the relevance of undergraduate training in dental laboratory technology in their practice.

A pretested questionnaire was posted to 750 dental practitioners in Sri Lanka exploring their socio-demographic information, professional qualifications and clinical experiences and their views on undergraduate laboratory technology training.

Hundred and seventy three dental practitioners with a mean experience of 19.2 ± 12.24 (SD) years responded. Eighty four per cent of them were from urban areas and 67% were males with 58.4% having no postgraduate training. Fifty two per cent of the respondents indicated that the program needs improvements. From the respondents 39.9% - 60.7% reported that there is no training on techniques such as fixed prosthetics, maxillofacial prosthetics and ceramic techniques. Of the respondents, 8.1% to 68.8% indicated that the exposures to different laboratory technical procedures are inadequate. Sixty nine percent to 80% of respondents reported that fixed prosthodontics, ceramic techniques, metal removable partial dentures and indirect restorations are among the techniques useful in practice but still not included in the training program.

In general, the practicing dental surgeons are of the opinion that the extent of the current training in laboratory techniques in commonly used treatment modalities is less relevant and insufficient for catering to the treatment demands of patients. These findings highlight the need for updating the content of available curriculum of prosthodontics to equip future dental surgeons to meet the demands in their practice.