

# Dentistry around the World

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Dentistry throughout the world is practiced differently, and training in dentistry varies as well.

In all European countries, there exist public dental services and/or subsidies that ensure that most citizens have access to the dental services they require, regardless of their ability to pay. Information regarding the various levels of dental care provision throughout Europe can be found in the Manual of Dental Practice, published by the Council of European Dentists.<sup>1</sup>

In Finland, education in dentistry is through a 5.5-year Licentiate of Dental Medicine [Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) or DDS] course, which is offered after high school graduation. The first phase of training begins with a unified 2-year preclinical training for dentists and physicians. Problem-based learning (PBL) is employed depending on the university. The 3rd year of autumn consists of the clinico-theoretical phase in pathology, genetics, radiology, and public health and is partially combined with physicians' second phase. The third phase of clinical training lasts for the remaining 3 years and includes periods of being on call at the University Central Hospital Trauma Center, Clinic of Oral and Maxillofacial Diseases, and at the children's clinic. Candidates who successfully complete the 4th year of training qualify for a paid summer rotation in a community health center of their choice.

In Sweden, a 5-year dental education is offered at four universities. Dental services are free for everyone up to 20 years of age. The English title given to dental graduates in Sweden was University Degree in Dental Surgery (DDS) until 2013. Due to the implementation of Bologna, the dental high schools changed the title DDS to Degree of Master of Science in Dental Surgery and also awarded a purely academic title of Master of Science (120 credits) in Dental Science. All dentists in the European Union/Entry/Exit System (EES) are eligible to work in Sweden. Dentists with an exam outside EES are required to take a 1-year course at Karolinska in Stockholm. From 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016, fluency in the Swedish language is also required for dentists with an exam from EES.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States, dentists earn either a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or DMD degree. There is no difference in the training for either degree. The degrees are equivalent and are recognized equally by all state boards of dentistry. There are 56 accredited dental schools in the United States requiring 4 years of postgraduate study (except for one unique 3-year program at the University of the Pacific). Most applicants to dental school have attained at least a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts degree, but a small percentage are admitted only after fulfilling specific prerequisite courses. So, unlike many other countries (other than the United States, Canada, and Australia), it usually takes >8 years to become a dentist. The difference relates to the history involved in the division of medicine and surgery in medical practice. There are limited opportunities for dental education in the United States. Due to the hands-on training required, dental education

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is expensive and is not subsidized by the federal government. According to the American Dental Education Association, "average educational debt for all indebted dental school graduates in the Class of 2019 was \$292,169." A dentist may go on for further training in a dental speciality which requires an additional 1–7 years of postdoctoral training, including nine specialties.<sup>3</sup>

Australian dentistry is overseen by the Australian Dental Council (ADC) and the Dental Board of Australia. The professional body for dentists is the Australian Dental Association. Dentists trained in Australia must meet the entry requirements of one of the Australian institutions offering dental courses and then complete the required full-time academic training leading to a dental degree. If dentists wish to specialize, they must complete extra studies after having had clinical experience. Persons holding the qualifications of DDS, Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS), Bachelor of Dental Science, BDent, BDentSc, DMD, Master of Dentistry, or GradDipDent from an accredited Australian and New Zealand university can register if they pass the ADC examinations and/or completed a 2-year advance standing program in order to obtain a locally accredited dental qualification.

In Taiwan, after graduating from high school, students are required to take a 6-year dental program to complete their DDS/DMD degree. Dental school admissions are competitive in Taiwan. Students should complete 5 years of medical basic and dental professional courses at their own universities, followed by a year of internships before graduation.

In India, dentistry is through the BDS course, which includes 4 years of study and 1 year of compulsory internship. Dental education in India is regulated by the Dental Council of India. Since 2016, National Eligibility cum Entrance Test has started for all aspirants—Indian and foreign. No autonomous university can conduct its own exam anymore.<sup>4</sup>

To become a dentist in Hong Kong, one must complete the 6-year BDS course in the University of Hong Kong. Students learn basic health sciences and dental sciences under a PBL curriculum.

In the United Kingdom, dentists complete 5 years of undergraduate study to earn a BDS degree. After graduating, most dentists will enter a vocational training scheme of either 1 or 2 years of lengthy to receive their full National Health Service registration. Dentists must register with the General Dental Council and meet their requirements as the governing body of the profession before being allowed to practice.<sup>5</sup>

The practice of dentistry in Canada is overseen by the National Dental Association Examination Board of Canada, while specialization is overseen by the Royal College of Dentists. Canadian dentistry is not publicly run; however, some provinces provide free dental care for children and the elderly. Other Canadians are mostly covered by workplace dental plans, but many have to pay out of pocket.<sup>6</sup>

The educational needs can be viewed as a three-dimensional problem, increased breadth across the dental team, vertical

integration within and between specialities, the expansion longitudinally with lifelong learning, and continuing professional development.

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