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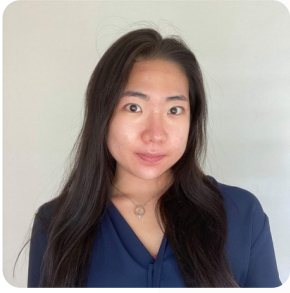
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A MESSAGE FROM THE NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE



JIYUN KIM



MICHELLE LUONG

Greetings!

We are Jiyun Kim and Michelle Luong, the 2021-2022 UCLA ASDA Newsletter Committee Chairs! As this year's Chairs, we are proud to continue the legacy of our predecessors, Stephanie Peacock and Guiselle Murillo, who have helped redefine the importance of journalism in the world of dentistry. In addition to our roles as editors-in-chief of the Diastema, the publication for the UCLA ASDA Chapter, we also serve as the parent to our pre-dental counterpart, Leeway Space. With the pre-dental Editors-in-Chiefs managing the editing, designing, writing, and publishing from start to finish, Leeway Space has become an invaluable tool of self-expression and knowledge dissemination among pre-dental students. We hope you join us in bearing witness to the amazing work and artistry they have created as a result of their dedication, creativity, and capability!

Warmly,

Jiyun Kim Michelle Luong

Jiyun Kim and Michelle Luong
UCLA ASDA Newsletter Committee Chairs

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRE-DENTAL COMMITTEE

Hello pre-dental students!

As this year's co-chairs of the UCLA ASDA Pre-Dental Outreach Committee and current second year dental students, we are thrilled to present the Fall 2021 issue of Leeway Space -- a newsletter written by pre-dents for pre-dents! Much has happened within the course of this past year, and we are truly proud of our team of pre-dental students from across the country who have persevered through challenging times and worked so diligently to bring together articles covering an eclectic mix of topics. Not only are these relevant for the dental community as a whole, but are also particularly catered towards other pre-dental students. And what better way to deliver these topics to an audience of pre-dental students, than pre-dental students themselves!

We know that the road to becoming a dental student can be daunting with many things to consider, but we encourage you to enjoy the process as you tackle the challenges ahead of you and trust that the journey will develop in you a strong and resilient heart! We would like to extend a huge thank you to our team, as well as to all of you readers for taking the time to read this season's issue. We hope that it brings much insight and perspective for you as you prepare your path towards dental school, and even further - as a wonderful dentist providing care for patients!

We hope that from the stories that you read in this issue, you can partake in the opportunities that ASDA has to offer and perhaps write for one of them in the future. We have lots of exciting events planned for the upcoming year, including the continuation of our widely successful virtual shadow days and mentorship program, and we look forward to meeting some of you at them soon!

Ethan Co Jackie Chalmers

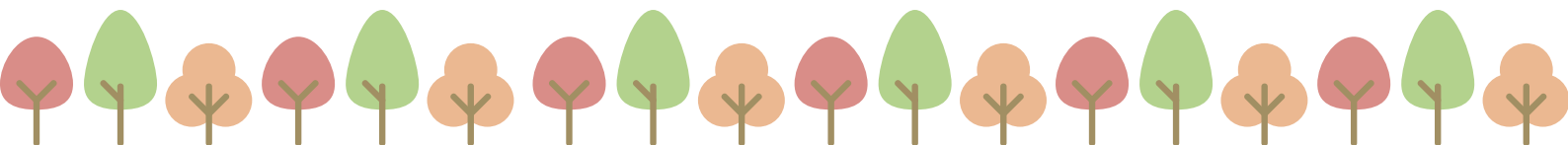
Ethan Co & Jackie Chalmers
UCLA ASDA Predental Outreach Committee Co-Chairs



ETHAN CO



JACKIE CHALMERS



A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF



NIKKI PARIKH



CELESTE NGUYEN

Dear Readers,

We warmly present to you Volume 6: Issue 2 of Leeway Space! Leeway Space is a student-led newsletter featuring stories, insight, and advice written by pre-dental students, for pre-dental students.

In this issue, writers shared their knowledge about every step of the pre-dental journey. From balancing extracurriculars, shadowing specialists, and taking gap years, to managing dental school debt and learning about postdoctoral programs, the variety in the experiences shared is a reflection of the Leeway Space Team, composed of pre-dents from all over the country with both traditional and non-traditional paths. In total, the variety of perspectives show that each person's journey to dental school is unique and that there is no one way to be a pre-dental student. So, whether you are just beginning your pre-dental years or ready for the next chapter, we hope that Leeway Space is a helpful resource for you!

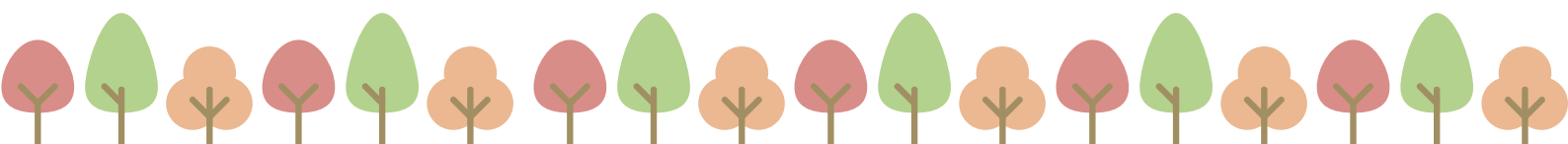
While at home during the unprecedented past year of online classes, the two of us searched for ways to pursue our passions and stay connected with the vast world of dentistry. Thanks to the power of social media, we found out about Leeway Space through the UCLA ASDA pre-dental Instagram! We had such a great time publishing and editing articles for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 issues and are so excited to be back this year leading the publication as Editors-in-Chief.

Both of us are so proud of our team for contributing their hard work and creativity to create this insightful Fall magazine. We hope you enjoy this issue showcasing enriching experiences and diverse points of view from pre-dental students across the nation. On behalf of the Leeway Space team, we wish you the best as you move forward in your pre-dental journey, and happy reading!

Sincerely,

Nikki Parikh Celeste Nguyen

Nikki Parikh and Celeste Nguyen
Leeway Space Editors-in-Chief



Meet the Newsletter Team



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WHY I CHOSE DENTISTRY

Frandy Castellano Gutierrez

UMass Medical School, Post-Baccalaureate 2022



When faced with the question, “why dentistry?” I can only hear the sound of my beating heart that echoes the lapping waves of the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean Sea’s nursing arms of my native land, the Dominican Republic symbolizes compassion, diversity, inclusion, justice, trust, and life, all of which describe the scope of what dentistry represents to me. Even today, the growing field of dentistry could use improvement in many of these aspects. And so, more has to be done—that is where you and I come in.

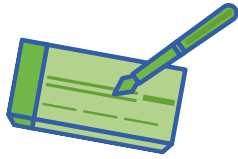
There are a million different reasons we could choose a career in dentistry, and each person’s path upon discovering their initial interest in this field will differ. Personally, I am taken back to the symbolism of the Caribbean Sea waves. When I was growing up in a third-world country, my family and community were stripped of the ability to gain access to medical and dental care. Since I was a child, I have seen how the planted seed of disparities continuously blossomed into every part of our lives. At that moment, I became fond of the idea of being a doctor because I understood the possibility of identifying, advocating, and promoting services to support and address our communities’ human needs. More importantly, I discovered that dentistry appealed to me because it connected the oral cavity to systemic and public health, art, and humanities in order to seek solutions to the ongoing disparities in our communities.



The multifaceted aspect of dentistry allows us to approach healthcare holistically and improve the social determinants of health to enhance our patients’ lives. Have you ever thought about how dentistry allows us to not only transform someone’s smile, but also restore their life through preventative care? If not, I invite you to think of dentistry as a puzzle of broken pieces of your most valuable and personal possession mended together. Whether it’s a picture of your mother or an artifact passed down generations of your family, when that piece is broken, you hold on to it because of the beauty it paints. Better yet, this integration in dentistry represents my favorite Japanese art known as Kintsugi, where broken pottery or ceramics are repaired with gold to emphasize the beauty of its past. With this in mind, dentistry allows us to create an inclusive, diverse, compassionate, and trustworthy environment to improve the overall life of patients.

My hope with this is that you see the beauty of dentistry and the cathartic feeling it introduces to the lives of our patients and ourselves. I envision a field where we can become dental architects in marginalized communities to desperately seal the gap and provide treatments to all. It’s now your chance to be part of a movement where addressing and advocating for human rights creates inclusive and culturally competent professionals who will revolutionize how care is delivered within and beyond the boundaries of our communities.

DENTAL SCHOOL DEBT AND MANAGEMENT



NHI TRAN
UCLA '21



Pursuing a degree in dentistry can lead to a fulfilling and high-paying career. However, pursuing this rewarding profession often comes with a hefty price tag. According to the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), the average educational debt for the Class of 2020's dental school graduates was \$304,824, with the average for public and private schools at \$270,125 and \$349,730, respectively. While the cost of dental education varies for each student, it has been on the rise for many decades. The 2010 American Dental Association (ADA) report shows a nearly doubling of tuition rates from 2000 to 2010 for both resident and non-resident students. The cost of dental school is enormous and can often be difficult to wrap our brains around, considering that most of us, as pre-dental students, have never taken out that many loans before for our undergraduate education. So, what are some ways to navigate through dental school financially and make this mountain of debt manageable after graduation?



Money That Requires No Pay



Dental school is expensive, so having multiple ways to subsidize the cost can alleviate the financial burden after graduation. One of the best ways to pay for school is to use money that you do not need to pay back, ranging from personal savings to scholarships and grants. In terms of personal savings, budgeting your spending is key as it gives you a sense of how much savings are allotted to the educational cost, emergency fund, and monthly expenses, for example. In addition to savings, seeking scholarships and grants can help lower the dental school cost, even if the process seems daunting. Some universities offer grants and scholarships, which are typically merit-based, although there are options available to students with financial needs. Other third-party organizations and companies, such as the ADA and ADEA, as well as those that promote higher education for minority students like the Hispanic Dental Association and the National Dental Association, may also offer scholarships and grants to dental students as well.

Additionally, you can participate in service programs that cover your dental school expenses in return for a set number of years of service. For example, the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP), funded by the military, offers to cover tuition and fees in exchange for serving one year of active duty for each year you receive aid. Similarly, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Scholarship offers to cover dental education costs in exchange for a minimum of two years of full-time service in an approved high-need area. Although a drawback of service commitment is the inflexibility for residencies and locations after graduation, it still remains a great choice for many students.



Federal Student Aid



If eligible, it is highly recommended to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to gain access to federal aid. For most dental students, the bulk of their loans come from direct unsubsidized loans, which have a low, fixed interest rate, require no payments while enrolled in school, and are not based on credit. As of the 2021-2022 academic year, the direct unsubsidized fixed interest rate is 5.28%. Additionally, there are federal direct plus loans, also known as grad PLUS. Unfortunately, compared to the direct unsubsidized loans, PLUS loans have a higher, fixed interest rate of 6.28% and require one not to have an adverse credit history. Therefore, maximizing your borrowing with the direct unsubsidized loan is essential before taking out Direct PLUS.



Private Student Loan



If you still need financial assistance after considering the above options, the private student loans issued by banks and private lenders can help close the gap. However, this option is the least ideal because of limited repayment and postponement options compared with federal loans. Therefore, the ADEA recommends speaking with the financial aid office before taking out private loans.



What Happens After Graduation



There are many federal and state loan repayments programs available after graduating from dental school. For example, income-driven repayment plans allow you to pay back loans based on your income and family size. In addition, if you work for the non-profit sector, you may qualify for a public service loan forgiveness which forgives your loans after making 120 qualifying payments. Another option you may consider is refinancing your student loans to make loan payments more manageable. The ADA exclusively endorses Laurel Road's refinancing program, which offers qualifying ADA members a 0.25% rate reduction to Laurel Road's already low rates.

Ultimately, the large amount of dental school debt may seem intimidating; nevertheless, with proper planning to borrow and repay loans after graduation, it is not impossible to pay off all debts. I often think of loans as a financial investment rather than a financial burden because beyond the monetary aspects, being a dentist is a life-long commitment and a passion for helping others to lead a better and healthier life. The smiles that dentists are able to bring to patients' faces are priceless.

Sources:

American Dental Education Association. (2010). 2010 Senior Survey.

"Educational Debt." ADEA: The Voice of Dental Education.
www.adea.org/godental/money_matters/educational_debt.aspx.

“SEWING” THE SEEDS:

EXTRACURRICULARS AS A PRE-DENTAL UNDERGRADUATE



KYLIE PHAM, 3RD YEAR, UCLA

From balancing extracurriculars to maintaining academic standards, the pre-dental journey can be overwhelming to the typical undergraduate. It is considered standard that grades are to be sustained alongside clubs, work, research, volunteering, and shadowing amongst the already pressuring demands of college life. With the many requirements needed for professional schools, it is an enigma how one can pursue dentistry while preserving sanity.

Especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of online learning, it has been difficult for many pre-dental students to find a healthy balance between academics and extracurricular activities. With the appropriate methods and mindset, however, stressful, time-consuming extracurriculars can become stress-relieving hobbies.

I for one was inspired to launch an online boutique selling fabric face masks at the start of the pandemic; I wanted my business to promote mask wear by transforming the concept of a face mask from safety protocol to trendy fashion. I was able to combine the artistic, business, and personal skills that are applicable to dentistry, while also participating in an extracurricular activity that was enjoyable to me. Although it was challenging establishing a middle ground between sewing and schoolwork, the pleasant customer interactions, positive reviews, and the existence of a creative outlet transformed difficult work into a leisurely pastime. I followed my heart and chose an extracurricular that I truly loved and in consequence discovered a hobby that was applicable to dentistry.

Doing an activity that you are sincerely passionate about rather than something that might merely appear stellar on paper will “sew” the seeds to a successful resume, application, and future career. It will set the foundation to give you dimension as a person in comparison to flat characters with no passion and a lack of direction. Rather than participating in activities for the sake of words written on paper, you should participate in activities for the purpose of self growth and interest. Enjoy your fleeting college experience and take advantage of the many opportunities available to you. Strive to be the best version of yourself rather than the best dental school applicant; living in your present is as important as living for your future.

EXPERIENCES IN A DENTAL SPECIALTY: ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY

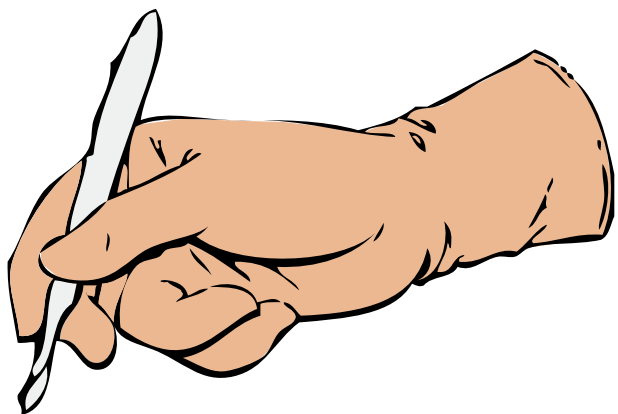


YUTONG DAI
UCLA '24



I will always remember my first day at an oral surgeon's clinic. Although I chose a less busy time on a weekday, I was immediately struck by the high patient volume upon arrival. Despite the fast pacing, the oral surgeons still greeted all the patients patiently. The staff at the clinic coordinated with the oral surgeon in harmony, making sure to communicate clearly and spend ample time with each patient. At the end of my consultation, I inquired with the surgeon if it was an unusually busy day; the surgeon's answer imprinted in my memory forever. "Although oral surgery is a specialty within dentistry, it is more like a hospital than a dental clinic, in that the specialists perform surgeries, anesthesia, and sometimes get called in for emergencies."

Currently, OMFS is undergoing some of the biggest renovations in the history of the field. Due to creative technological developments in recent years, oral surgery continues to expand while incorporating new procedures to treat and help more patients. For example, oral surgeons today can treat sleep apnea, which was not part of the OMFS discipline just a decade ago. Technology such as 3D printing, MRI and CT scans, and intraoperative computer-assisted navigation systems have significantly reduced the risks associated with OMFS procedures, increasing their precision, helping with pre-operational planning, and reducing post-surgical recovery periods (Hakobyan 2020). OMFS is a field that is changing and evolving, with innovations driving constant improvements. This specialty offers a lifetime of learning opportunities and humbling experiences.



According to the American Dental Association, oral and maxillofacial surgery (OMFS) is "the specialty of dentistry which includes the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive treatment of diseases, injuries, and defects involving both the functional and esthetic aspects of the hard and soft tissues of the oral and maxillofacial region." As a dental speciality that stands at the intersection of dentistry and medicine, as well as esthetics and science, OMFS is a discipline that incorporates a wide array of procedures. As a result, "no two days in an oral surgeon's practice are ever the same," according to Dr. Bauer from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. After four years of dental school and four to six years of residency, an oral surgeon can perform special teeth extractions, dental implants or corrective jaw surgery. If an oral surgeon chooses to specialize, they can choose one of the four fellowship programs: microvascular reconstruction, cosmetic facial surgery, craniofacial surgery and pediatric maxillofacial surgery or cranio-maxillofacial trauma.

There are several aspects students should consider before choosing to specialize in the field, including student debt and long years of schooling. On the bright side, according to ADEA, dental students enter the income stream faster than the other healthcare professionals which may allow for aggressive repayments. Oral surgeons stay on their feet throughout the day, which is why it is recommended to stretch, perform surgeries with a good body posture, and use assistive devices during surgeries (Gaowgzeh 2015). Fortunately, there are many opportunities for interested students to get a feel for what OMFS entails. For example, pre-dental students can be immersed in the day-to-day life at an OMFS office by shadowing oral surgeons and residents. Dr. Andrew Read-Fuller, an oral surgeon who graduated from UCLA, recommends students to get involved with organized dentistry and externships. Participating in dental societies on a local and national level helps students become familiar with the industry and its challenges, which better equips students for the career. Organizations such as ASDA offer insightful webinars into the basics of an oral surgery, while the American Association with Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon (AAOMS) provides in-depth courses that broaden the scope of knowledge for both the dental student and the oral surgeon.

OMFS is a noble profession that intellectually challenges its professionals. The variety of treatments it entails allows surgeons to perform a lifetime of rewarding procedures. While the journey to OMFS is long and arduous, with determination, hard work, diligence and thorough consideration, students can enjoy a career that allows them to improve patients' health both in dentistry and medicine.



GAP YEARS: THE GAME PLAN

Article by Azniv Libaryan
California Baptist University ('17) &
University of Southern California ('20 & '21)

The path to dentistry is not linear. Each pre-dental student has embarked on this journey due to their personal experiences and justifications for becoming a dentist. Early realizations of aspiration or inspiration from a dentist in life make the path of dentistry straightforward for many. For others like myself, dentistry sparked an interest later in our educational careers, and we felt unsure of where to start.

Gap years are not just a year or two off. There are many components to tackle that will strengthen your dental school application, such as taking the DAT, shadowing, volunteering, exhibiting leadership, taking pre-requisite STEM courses, and participating in other extracurricular or research activities. Non-traditional students, career changers, and reapplicants often embark on this journey by taking an extra gap year (or a few) to fulfill such requirements, improve areas as needed, or get their finances in order. However, gap years are not limited to non-traditional students; traditional students can also improve those areas, spend time with loved ones, work to gain experiences, or travel before committing to dental school.

No matter your reason is for taking a gap year, it is important to always approach gap years with the understanding that they are intended to benefit you, not weaken your application. Rather, gap years should be seen as an opportunity to take accountability and improve yourself by creating a game plan for reaching your goals. I graduated in 2017 and used my four gap years to improve academically and gain extracurricular experiences. Academically, I completed necessary prerequisite coursework and completed two master's degrees, one of which was in an area unrelated to science but for my own personal interest. Similarly, to gain experiences I continued with my current established career to assist with my financial situation, shadowed dentists to understand if dentistry is for me, volunteered, and worked on advocacy teams. I customized my gap year to not only meet requirements for dental schools but also incorporate my interests. Doing so will also help you stand out to admission's teams as your applications will show who you are as a person and your abilities.

A few ideas of how to spend your gap year include:

- Shadowing
- Taking the DAT
- Preparing your AADSAS application
- Volunteering
- Going on mission trips
- Networking
- Researching
- Studying abroad
- Completing a master's program or post-baccalaureate coursework
- And much more!

However, a few cons of this journey include the potential financial setback of tuition from attending additional schooling and the amount of time it takes. I personally do not view time as a setback, as it is better utilized when you are ready, as applying itself can be expensive and a risk.

To get started, I would recommend the following steps:

1. Brainstorm and make a timeline for yourself with goals you wish to complete during your gap year.
2. Have your peers, mentors, or pre-health advisors review your list to see if they have resources or suggestions to help you reach your goals.
3. Familiarize yourself with each dental school's requirements to ensure you are not missing any coursework (a useful tool is ADEA's Dental Explorer).
4. Research local options for volunteering or shadowing.
5. Find pre-dental clubs to join or follow to find opportunities and educational programs.
6. Join or follow different dental schools or your District's pre-dental ASDA to network and learn from current dental students and admission teams. Pre-dental ASDAs often post workshops to build your resume and experiences for your application and hand skills.

Take advantage of your gap year opportunity to not only improve your application but to relax and enjoy yourself! As previously stated, each pre-dental student's journey is unique. Whether you choose to take a gap year or not; make the most out of all your experiences and remember to focus on activities and experiences you truly care about. Do not take extra gap years, compare yourself to others, or treat everything like a checklist. You want to stand out as an applicant and show sincerity in your experiences. Remember that your gap year will pass in the blink of an eye, so manage your time wisely.

Lastly, remember to stay motivated and focus on the bigger picture - yourself. Everything you do is for yourself, and you have to enjoy the process. Remember to take care of yourself. Self-care is very important, so try to dedicate at least one day out of the week as your rest day. Don't study, volunteer, work, or do anything related to dentistry; just forget about your responsibilities and use that day to go out, socialize, and have fun!

THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP: PAYING IT FORWARD

Maria Bello Carrillo
UCLA '20



Clarity of vision and purpose – something we all seek. In life, we can pursue a myriad of aspirations. For me, everything I have ever pursued or committed to has been because it aligns with who I am, who I seek to be, and my values. But, I could not have done it without one of my pillars in life: my mentors – a light and guiding hand in my circuitous path to dentistry. My desire to attain higher education, pursue dentistry and empower communities were all once seeds that were watered through the nurture of mentorship and blossomed by being intentional with my efforts. For me, the power of mentorship lies in the cultivation of diverse relationships with people who have experienced similar challenges as me. It was the shared upbringings and the desire of my mentors to execute change in underrepresented communities within dentistry that empowered me and steered me towards my path. Connecting with my mentor Fernanda, a D4 UCLA student, helped me realize that I am not confined to the challenges historically faced by my Latinx community when pursuing higher education. She instilled in me to be confident in my story and to use my challenges as an opportunity to grow and be a more resilient person. As we navigate our journey, we are all going to have questions about the application cycle, interviews, and the preparation necessary to be a well-rounded applicant. One of the keys to success is to have a mentor that can guide and inspire us.

You might ask “So, how can I find a mentor?”



There are different avenues that a student can take to find a mentor. The first step is to take initiative. It can be intimidating to reach out to professionals in the field, but it is important to start building relationships with people who have been in your shoes. Going to ASDA conferences, signing up for mentorship programs facilitated by dental students, or building community amongst other pre-dental students are all excellent ways to find mentors. Once you have found a mentor, it is important to be honest with yourself on the areas you need to work on. Whether that be building better study habits, improving your time management, or being more proactive with the resources available to you– these are all areas that can be improved upon with the help of a mentor and by being accountable.

There is beauty in seeing yourself grow but also seeing others grow. Therefore, mentorship is something that we should give of ourselves at every stage of our journeys to keep paying it forward. So the question is not just “Who will be my mentor?” but also, “Who will I mentor?” Empowering the next generation of pre-dental students can help increase the diversity of the dental field in different aspects. Every person we encounter will come from a different background and may face different obstacles. Often, social factors play a significant role in whether a student can have access to the resources to pursue a career in dentistry. That is why we must come together as a community to improve the representation of all students in the dental field. My journey to dentistry has been complicated, but I am eager to continue following the passion that has brought me to this moment of applying to dental school. As a Latina woman in dentistry, my humble roots have contributed to my resilience and determination to continue being the architect of my life but also help other students be the architects of their lives through mentorship.



WORKFORCE, AEGD, OR GPR: WHAT'S THE BEST CHOICE FOR YOU?

Article by Jacqueline Ha (University of the Pacific '23)



When discussing dental residency programs, many dentists automatically just think of the typical residency programs for specialization: orthodontics, pediatrics, and endodontics programs. However, there are also residency programs for dentists who choose to continue to pursue general dentistry that many dental students and even current practicing dentists are not completely familiar with. The two general residency programs that are offered are: Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) and General Practice Residency (GPR) program. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), the demand for these programs have been on a constant rise in recent years.

AEGD PROGRAMS

According to the ADA, AEGD programs provide “advanced training in clinical dentistry and applied basic sciences”. It is a clinic-based program where residents can refine their skills and gain exposure to the many aspects of general dentistry. This new perspective can enhance the confidence of professionals as they transition from dental school to private practice. They can get hands-on experience with various skills that they may have had limited exposure to in dental school, which include cases such as emergency patient treatment and sedation techniques. Upon completing an AEGD program, dentists feel better prepared to meet the demands of being a private practice dentist by having the knowledge, experience, and speed to diagnose and treat patients to the best of their ability.

GPR PROGRAMS

GPR programs are similar to AEGD programs in the way that their purpose is also to provide advanced clinical and didactic training in various concentrations of general dentistry. However, the key distinction is that most GPR programs are affiliated with a hospital. GPR residents are exposed to more medically complex cases which are not typically seen or treated in a private practice setting. Residents spend most of their time treating ambulatory and hospitalized patients, and spend the rest of their time working on inpatient cases in the operating and emergency room.

It has been a controversial topic among dentists on whether it is better to pursue a residency program upon graduating dental school or to be an associate with a private practice right away. Some argue that these post-doctoral programs greatly help them gain the skills and confidence they needed to smoothly transition into private practice. Residents greatly value the efficiency of transitioning from seeing about three to four patients a day as a dental student to seeing three to four patients in just a few hours as an associate dentist.

At first glance, AEGD and GPR programs are similar in many ways; they are both postdoctoral programs that generally last one year and provide further education in general dentistry. However, there are key distinctions between the two that allow potential candidates to favor one program over the other which largely depends on one's career goals.

On the other hand, others point out that not everything you learn in these programs applies to what you see day-to-day in private practice dentistry. Thus, they believe that pursuing these programs may not be worthwhile. Instead, they claim that it would be more beneficial for newly graduated dentists to associate with a private practice right away, allowing them to gain the benefit of mentorship from experienced dentists. Ultimately, the debate comes down to personal preference and what each individual sees fit for their career in dentistry.

For most general dentists who are considering one of these programs, it is simply a choice of whether or not they want to further their general dentistry education. However, in places such as Delaware and New York, it is not a choice but rather a requirement for all general dentists to complete a one-year postdoctoral residency to be eligible to practice in those respective states.

Choosing the right postgraduate plan can be a daunting task that requires weeks or months of thorough consideration of all possible options. When choosing the right postdoctoral program to pursue, it is best to first determine your goals in pursuing such a program and then thoroughly evaluate which of the two types of programs best aligns with those goals. It is important when deciding between your schools of interest to research and look into what each school offers because all schools have different ways of teaching their residents that may or may not fit your goals. This can greatly help you make an informed decision on how to narrow down which residency program you choose to apply to and attend.

Sources:

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- <https://dentistry.ucsf.edu/programs/post-grad/aegd>



Where Mental and Dental Health Meet

ARTICLE BY SAVERA AHMED (UCLA '24)



[Warning: This article discusses topics of anxiety, depression, and eating disorders]

With the movement for mental health awareness gaining greater traction in recent years, many of us have learned that our mental health is unequivocally as important as our physical health. Our mental health can shape how we think, feel, and act, and can play an important role towards our overall well being. When viewing mental health through a holistic lens, we see a connection not only between our mental and physical health, but also between our mental and oral health. So how can mental illness interfere with oral health?



"...those who suffer from mental illness are 2.7 times more susceptible to losing all their teeth"



Common Oral Health Issues Associated With Mental Illness

Poor oral health can often be attributed to displays of tooth erosion, cavities, and periodontal (gum) disease, and if left untreated, patients are at greater risk of developing deeper issues. These issues are common amongst those with mental illnesses, and further reinforces the statistic that those who suffer from mental illness are 2.7 times more susceptible to losing all their teeth (Kisely). As one can imagine, dental issues can be devastating to a patient's quality of life since daily activities such as eating, speaking, or smiling can quickly become challenging hurdles.

Sources:
Kisely S. No Mental Health without Oral Health. *Can J Psychiatry*. 2016

Dentophobia

Dentophobia, the fear of visiting the dentist, is more common than we think according to a 2015 study that the American Dental Association (ADA) conducted. The study reported that 22% of adults neglected visiting their dentist due to extreme fear and preemptive thoughts of feeling pain and discomfort. Dentophobia can be harmful for a patient's oral health because lack of treatment can leave small issues undetected that can later develop into more serious issues. However, dental fear and anxiety is not untreatable. As pre-dental students, it is imperative that we understand early on that all patients come from different backgrounds with varied thought processes, and it is our duty to extend our maximum compassion and understanding in caring for our patients. For patients with Dentophobia, practices that may ease the patients' anxiety include addressing patient concerns before and during treatment, making patient rooms feel safe and comfortable, and acknowledging that patients may need a break from time to time.

Mental Illnesses and Poor Oral Health

Mental illnesses that can negatively affect oral health include depression, eating disorders, dementia, and schizophrenia. Patients with depression may experience weakening and loss of their teeth due to self-neglect, substandard oral hygiene practices, and possible increased alcohol and tobacco consumption. Tooth erosion is also often observed in those with eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa, since vomiting frequently causes corrosive acids to enter the mouth and break down the teeth. Schizophrenic patients, and those with dementia, commonly develop bacterial infections in the mouth from lack of oral hygiene as well (Kisely).

Why Is it Important to Acknowledge the Connection between Mental and Oral Health?

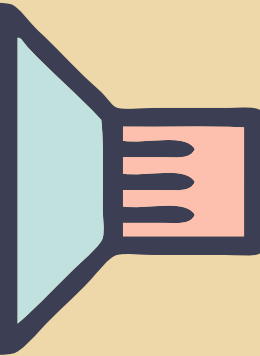
As pre-dental students and future healthcare providers, we must strive to dedicate ourselves to learning about the multifaceted nature of patient care that most definitely includes mental wellbeing. Viewing the patient in a holistic way can allow us to best treat them by creating a personalized plan of action that will help improve their overall quality of life. Through strong advocacy for the importance of oral hygiene in those facing mental illnesses, we can construct preventative health measures to significantly improve the oral health of those already facing hardship. Ultimately, awareness is the first step to change.

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