

BASCD 2022 ABSTRACT 18

How are dental professionals taught to deliver oral hygiene advice?

*Holloway, J.A., * Davies, M., West, N.X.
University of Bristol, UK*

Background:

Delivery of oral hygiene advice (OHA) and supporting behaviour change are fundamental skills for dental professionals (DPs). Limited research into how DPs are taught to deliver OHA at undergraduate level and reports that behavioural sciences are not fully integrated into dental curricula indicate that DPs are not equipped with skills required to improve the oral health of their patients.

Objectives:

To capture a snapshot of UK dental and dental hygiene and therapy (DH/DT) students on teaching on delivery of OHA and behavioural sciences.

Methods:

A cross-sectional self-reported online questionnaire completed by dental and DH/DT students recruited through the British Society of Periodontology Undergraduate Society. Approved by University of Bristol Faculty of Health Science Research Ethics Committee.

Results:

Between 22 May and 31 August 2020, 30 out of 42 society members responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 71.4%. Responses were from 20 dental students from 13 schools, and 10 DH/DT from 9 schools. Variation in the method and amount of teaching was seen between and within schools. The median number of hours of theory and practical teaching related OHA delivery was higher for final year DH/DT (17 and 14.5 hours, respectively) compared to final year dental students (7.5 and 7 hours). There was high variability in awareness of and teaching received on behavioural models among students between schools and student groups. 55% of dental students had been taught how to implement behaviour change, compared to 90% of DH/DT.

Conclusion:

There is high variability of teaching of delivering OHA and behaviour change in UK dental schools. Students can have different experiences of teaching at the same school. DH/DT receive more hours of teaching on delivering OHA compared to dental students. Students receive more theory than practical teaching, and desire more teaching on practical implementation of behaviour change.

Correspondence to:

Jessica Holloway

Email: jessica.holloway@bristol.ac.uk

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