

## BASCD 2023 ABSTRACT #15

### Perceived wellbeing and stress in undergraduate dental students in Cork, Ireland

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#### Background:

Dental student wellbeing and levels of stress should be acknowledged and managed to develop dentists who are better able to care for their patients.

#### Objectives:

This cross-sectional study aims to measure wellbeing and stress in dental students in Cork University Dental School and Hospital (CUDSH), and to assess if these have changed from 2020 through 2022.

#### Methods:

Ethical approval was obtained, after which an online questionnaire was distributed to all undergraduate dental students in CUDSH in December 2020, 2021 and 2022 (cycles 1, 2, and 3). Two established, validated surveys, the Perceived Wellness Survey and modified Dental Environment Stress questionnaire were used.

#### Results:

The response rate was 27% (72/263), 32% (87/270) and 26% (70/268) in study cycles 1, 2 and 3, respectively. There was no significant difference in the mean wellness composite score over the study cycles (13.87, 13.81, and 13.94, respectively). The students displayed no significant difference between academic years in wellness subscale categories. However, female students showed lower emotional wellbeing in cycles 2 ( $p=0.02$ ) and 3 ( $p=0.01$ ), and lower spiritual wellbeing in cycle 3 ( $p=0.05$ ) compared with male counterparts. The mean stress score for all students was 2.37 in 2020 and 2021, rising to 2.56 in 2022 ( $p=0.0265$ ). For individual academic year groups, this score generally trended upwards. Fifth year students displayed the highest stress levels in cycle 1 and 2 and the second highest stress levels in cycle 3, behind third year students. There was generally no significant difference in male and female stress levels, except in cycle 3 for academic ( $p=0.029$ ) and professional ( $p=0.038$ ) stressors, with female students showing a higher stress score. The academic domain was consistently the highest source of stress in all cycles ( $p<0.001$ ).

#### Conclusion:

This study provides a baseline level of perceived wellbeing and stress in undergraduate dental students in CUDSH.

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