

Integration of Oral Medicine in Clinical Teaching

Yasser Khaled*

General Dental Services, Marquette University, School of Dentistry, USA

***Corresponding Author:** Yasser Khaled, General Dental Services, Marquette University, School of Dentistry, USA.

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Oral medicine is a dental specialty that combines dentistry and medicine. It is defined as the dental specialty that is concerned with the diagnosis and management of intraoral non-dental pathology.

Oral medicine specialists treat patients with different orofacial conditions such as orofacial pain syndromes, oral mucosal diseases, salivary gland disorders and oral manifestations of systemic diseases. There is a growing need to implement this specialty globally due to the rapid progress in both medicine and dentistry, and to the growing percentage of senior citizens in many countries, the adequate diagnosis and treatment of oral diseases will become even more complex in the future.

The significance of the intraoral cavity in medicine is well known for a long time but the Oral medicine specialty is a newly evolving specialization. Some dental schools used to call it stomatology while other institutions gave it the term oral diagnosis.

Oral medicine deals with clinical diagnosis and non-surgical management of intraoral pathologies. The mouth may be affected by many cutaneous and gastrointestinal conditions. There is also the unique situation of hard tissues penetrating the epithelial continuity.

Sjogren's syndrome, lichen planus, Behcet's disease and pemphigus vulgaris, leukoplakia or erythroplakia and of chronic and acute pain conditions as myofascial pain, atypical facial pain, headaches and migraines are common conditions that oral medicine is concerned with.



Education of Oral Medicine has been managed in academic dental schools as a separate process from the teaching of diagnosis and management of systemic diseases. The reason for such an approach appears to have been caused by the concept that oral medicine usually reflects a localized disease rather than a generalized systemic disease.

Management of such conditions should include long-term pain management strategies. A debate is ongoing for integrating the teaching of oral medicine and orofacial pain to include a broad-based approach to the assessment and management of primary pain disorders and other forms of systemic pathology.

In North America, there are no specific curriculum guidelines for teaching Oral Medicine for dental students. This situation has the potential to cause confusion for new graduates.

Due to this lack of standardized teaching of Oral Medicine, patients with oral lesions/pain are treated differently.

University teaching of Oral Medicine has evolved a lot in the last few years but much more is needed to standardize the information given to the dental students. Qualitative and quantitative measures are needed to ensure that all predoctoral dental students learn the same about the diagnosis and treatment of intraoral lesions.

Accredited oral medicine residency programs in North America

- Carolinas Medical Center
- Harvard School of Dental Medicine
- Tufts University
- University of Alberta
- University of British Columbia
- University of California San Francisco
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Southern California
- University of Toronto
- University of Washington

Accredited advanced oral medicine programs in North America

- Advanced Program for International Dentists in Oral Medicine and Orofacial Pain - NYU.
- Online Master of Science in Orofacial Pain and Oral Medicine - USC.
- Oral Medicine Fellowship Program, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
- Oral Medicine Advanced Education Program at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine.

American board of dental specialties | ABDS

The ABDS is an independent organization of dental specialty boards. The Member Boards consist of examiners charged with the evaluation of dental specialty candidates. Verification that minimum training standards are met, and successful formal evaluation of the candidates is performed.

The following Dental Specialty Boards are recognized by the ABDS

- American Board of Oral Implantology
- American Board of Oral Medicine

- American Board of Orofacial Pain
- American Dental Board of Anesthesiology

American board of oral medicine (ABOM)

The American Board of Oral Medicine (ABOM) is the official certified organization of Oral Medicine in USA. Candidates who successfully pass the board's requirements are called Diplomates of the ABOM.

Oral medicine around the world

Australia

Oral Medicine programs are accredited by the Australian Dental Council (ADC). They are three years in length and culminate with either a Master degree (MDS) or a Doctor of Clinical Dentistry degree (DCLinDent).

New Zealand

New Zealand offers a 5-year intercalated clinical doctorate/medical degree (DCLinDent/MBChB) program. In July 2013, New Zealand dental council changed the qualifications for oral medicine to include the new DCLinDent in addition to a medical degree, with no requirement for a standard dental degree.

UK

Oral medicine is recognized as an accredited specialty by the General Dental Council of UK. Oral medicine specialists in the UK usually are not involved with dental management of their patients. Some UK oral medicine specialists have both medical and dental degrees. The GDC, in 2010, removed the requirement of medical degree as a prerequisite for entry into oral medicine specialist training which is normally 5 years, although it can be reduced to 3 years in recognition of previous medical degree.

USA

Oral medicine programs are 2 yrs in length but it is not an American Dental Association recognized specialty. Oral medicine experts teach at dental schools and graduate programs to ensure that the dental students receive excellent training in oral medicine.

Finally, dentistry must become more closely integrated with medicine in the all the educational programs around the world. Dental and medical faculty should work together to develop an integrated curriculum for dental and medical students. Dental students should be required students to participate in different rotations in hospitals and other facilities.

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