

Impact of clinical training on the attitudes of undergraduate dental students towards persons with special needs

Márcio DINIZ-FREITAS (1)*, Victoria COSTAS-COSTAS (1), Lucía FARIÑA-SUÁREZ (1), Lucía GARCÍA-CABALLERO (1)

Special Needs Unit and OMEQUI Research Group, School of Medicine and Dentistry, Health Research Institute of Santiago de Compostela (IDIS), Santiago de Compostela University (Spain)

AIM

The aim of this study was to determine how **access to clinical practices in real scenarios affects the attitudes and behaviors** of undergraduate students with respect to the dental care of individuals with special needs.

MATERIAL & METHODS

The study group consisted of **fifth-year undergraduate** dental students at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain). All participants were administered the **iADH Toolbox for measuring attitudes and intended behaviors** (iADH 2015), after translation and cultural adaptation to Spanish. This survey consists of 5 clearly differentiated parts with a total of 222 questions. In the present study, we only analyzed the blocks for Section 3, which evaluated "Attitudes regarding oral health" (13 questions), and Section 4, which evaluated "Expected behavior". In Section 4, **four differentiated scenarios** were chosen: 1._ A patient with physical disability; 2._ A patient with schizophrenia; 3._ An elderly patient with Alzheimer's disease who cannot leave their home; and 4._ An individual who did not speak the native language of the survey and who was of a different ethnicity than the student's. The survey was applied at 3 separate times: (T0) **At the start the academic year; (T1) Upon completion of the theoretical training + 60 hours of practical training; (T2) Upon completion of 120 hours of practical training.** The results were analyzed with the SPSS program, applying the Wilcoxon test and Student's t-test.

RESULTS

The participants included a total of 40 students, 22–23 years of age; 13 were men (32.5%), and 27 were women (67.5%). When evaluating the results of the measurement (T1) with respect to baseline (T0), the respondents considered that patients with special needs "should be treated by specialists" ($p=0.000$) (Fig. 1). There was also a clearer need to perform a "rapid, effective treatment, preventing anxiety" in the patient with schizophrenia ($p=0.019$). The predisposition to treat patients with Alzheimer's disease decreased ($p=0.001$), and there was an increase in the number of students who thought that "the treatment is extended" with foreign patients ($p=0.039$). Upon completing the practical training (T2), the students considered that they were "more qualified" to treat patients with special needs ($p=0.002$) and that they "had sufficient training" to do so without having to refer to specialists ($p=0.003$).

Patients with disability should always be treated by specialist practitioners

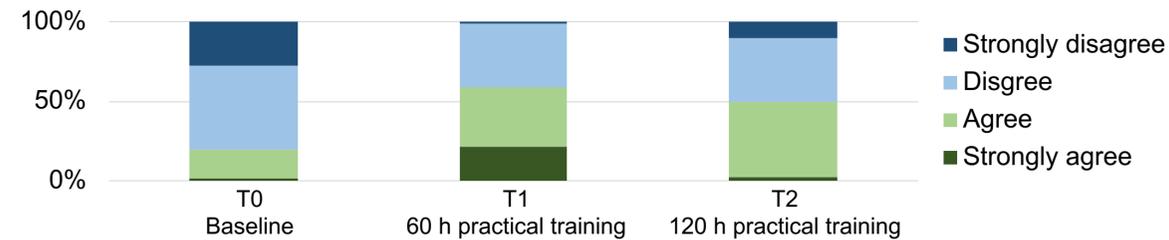


Fig. 1

The treatment of patients from marginalised groups is too time-consuming

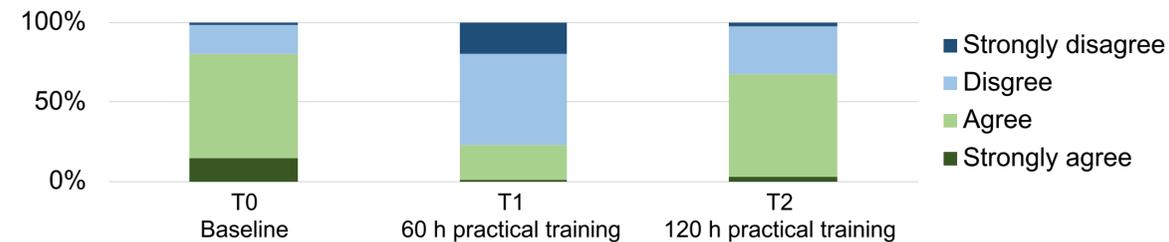


Fig. 2

More training is needed to prepare dental practitioners to provide care for patients with disability

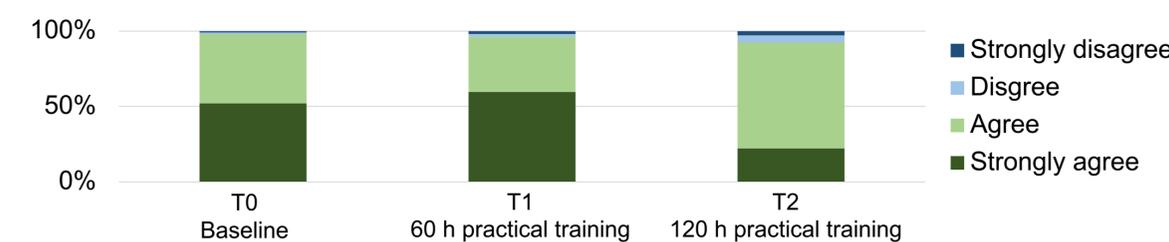


Fig. 3

CONCLUSIONS

Within the limitations of this study, **the results suggest that short block rotations have an adverse effect on student experience and outcomes of patient care**, especially those with mental and/or behavioral disorders.

By increasing the duration of practical clinical training, the students' self-sufficiency is increased in all of the planned scenarios.

REFERENCES

- Faulks D, et al. Development of a battery of tests to measure attitudes and intended behaviours of dental students towards people with disability or those in marginalised groups. *Eur J Dent Educ*. 2018;22(2):e278-e290.
- iADH Toolbox for measuring attitudes and intended behaviours. iADH 2015
- Mac Giolla Phadraig C, et al. Does Special Care Dentistry undergraduate teaching improve dental student attitudes towards people with disabilities? *Eur J Dent Educ* 2014; 19: 107-112.

CONTACT



Márcio Diniz Freitas
Assistant professor
Special Care Dentistry Unit
School of Medicine and Dentistry
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Email: marcio.diniz@usc.es