

Editorial

Is research an integral part of undergraduate training – An introspection as an academician

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“Research is to see what everybody else has seen and to think what nobody else has thought.” Albert Szent Gyorgyi.

Undergraduate training in dentistry deals with imparting the knowledge and skills needed to understand the stomatognathic system, the problems associated with it, and how to manage these problems. In India, this training is for 5 years where the student goes through didactic lectures, problem-based learning, and experiential learning which is assessed by a summative examination at the end of each year. The 5th year of training being a rotatory supervised practical experience of diagnosing and treating patients and hence releasing a competent dentist into society as guardians of the oral cavity. Ethics and compassion to humanity are ingrained during their training as part of the curriculum.

The National Education Policy 2020 is stressing on the importance of multidisciplinary research to find the technical solutions for health problems.^[1] This is possible only when platforms are created where students from technical institutions and healthcare institutions meet and discuss problems on which research is possible. This would need a better understanding of the language spoken by the specialties to work in a productive manner. Hence, it should the curriculum of undergraduate training include cross-disciplinary courses for the students with an aptitude for research.

The *Journal of Academy of Dental Education* is a journal for undergraduate students so as to initiate a mind of curiosity among the young minds. When reflecting on the manuscripts that have been published in the journal over the last decade, an article on Aeronautics in Dentistry: Navigating Oral Health Challenges in zero gravity was interesting to read, where oral and maxillofacial transformations in spaceflight are discussed.^[2] The review article on revisioning and critically emphasizing the need for psychosocial intervention in addressing body image distress in head-and-neck cancer patients showed the potential of a dental surgeon working with psychologists and psychiatrists in research projects that may bring out protocols to address body image distress among the head-and-neck cancer patients.^[3] The article on Influence of diet and Nutrition on Oral Health, where the authors have concluded that a vegetarian diet had an increased incidence of dental caries and tooth wear is an area of potential research among dental surgeons and nutritionists or dieticians. An analysis of the data obtained through computation revealed that providing subsidies for health education programs and campaigns can play a key role in empowering the individuals to make informed decisions about their oral

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health.^[4] This information would carry further weightage when research on the same is carried out with a team of members from the Information Technology and Dentistry combining their efforts. Now, with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its definitive effect on Dentistry as with every other aspect of life, it is interesting to note how AI has influenced the accuracy, efficiency, and patient outcomes in dentistry which is highlighted in the article – Smarter Smiles – How AI is revolutionizing dentistry.^[5]

Hence, the above examples from an undergraduate journal are enough evidence that there is ample scope for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research with meaningful outcomes that can be extrapolated to society to make a great impact. Research among the young minds of undergraduate students is definitely an area to be tapped to ensure growth in society. India is one of the youngest nations in the world, with 65% of the population below 35 years of age. “India’s biggest strength is its youth,” says LS Speaker Om Birla at an event in London in January 2025. Hence, the curriculum in Higher Educational Institutions must encourage research among undergraduate society to ensure

that our country is definitely on the path to becoming a developed country at least in this decade.

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