

REVIEW ARTICLE

A CAREER LADDER IN DENTISTRY- CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT:

The current status of dental education in India has some serious challenges that will need to be modified to be able to produce leaders in the field of dentistry to address these burgeoning needs. Some kind of career ladder in dentistry seems long overdue, but any effective plan to establish such a ladder must take into account the reality of the existing situation and the difficulty of changing it. With the Indian experience and tradition in mind, several factors have to be taken into account. Present article is an attempt to discuss the career prospects and problems encountered in dental world.

Key words: Career prospects, dental world, dentistry.

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INTRODUCTION

India is hovering to be a leader in the global economy in this century. Its population of more than 1 billion, nonetheless, will challenge both the medical and dental care systems. The current position of dental education in India has some solemn challenges that will need to be modified to be able to produce leaders in the field of dentistry to address these burgeoning needs.¹

Students' motivations in choosing a career in the health professions are of great interest for educators and admission committees, particularly in the field of dentistry.²

Choosing a career path can help you set professional goals and develop a strategy for getting where you want to be. Part of choosing an appropriate career path involves making an honest self-evaluation of your talents, abilities and interests. While elements of your path may change over time due to choice or circumstance, having an overall professional objective with which to guide yourself will help you make critical decisions with greater clarity.²⁻³

Before joining dentistry as a career, we generally don't have an idea what difficulties we are going to face after graduation. Most of us do this mistake by thinking that doing BDS ensures smooth career with easy and high returns. By the time we finish our internship this dream breaks and we come face to face with stark and hard realities. Everything is no more rosy as we had imagined.

“Changing the face cannot change anything but facing the change can do everything.”

BDS is not the end it's just the beginning of your career. A career path is just that – a journey, rather than a single

one-time decision. Every career path has milestones along the way. Internships can teach one more about what they do and what they don't want to do. No one's career path is a straight line. Everyone starts off with a vision of their ideal job, but this vision is really just a guess based purely on hypotheticals. A funny thing often happens when someone starts working at their ideal job, they realize it's not so ideal for them after all. Internships are a unique opportunity to test drive different positions to see which ride students enjoy most. Arthur Golden rightly said that ‘A mind troubled by doubt cannot focus on the course to victory’. It is a golden period to explore all the potential career options and select one as per their interest, capabilities and financial feasibility without any confusion or doubt.³⁻⁵ Chris Grosser rightly said that ‘*Opportunities don't happen, you create them*’. There is ample number of options after graduation in dentistry and one need to explore them as per their capabilities and interest:

1. Post graduation (M.D.S. in Dentistry)³⁻⁵

Master in Dental Surgery have a good scope both in terms of higher studies as well as in acquiring an immediate job. Higher education is one of the means by which one can acquire a greater knowledge and hence pursue a good career. Also the candidates after completion of MDS can apply for jobs. They can start up a private clinic or a dental lab, work in government or private institutions, work as tutor in some reputed colleges, work in research and advisory departments of a pharmaceutical solve huge mysteries by inflowing into the field of forensic dentistry, work as dental consultant to models, artists, well-known figures and also can carry out research on topics like oral

cancer. They have a vast scope in foreign countries also where the pay scale will also be much higher than the home country.

The certification courses after MDS helps the aspirants acquire better knowledge on those fields. These courses will certainly add up to their qualifications and hence help the candidates attain a career with attractive pay scale.

There is a vast career opportunity for the candidates who have completed their MDS. For those who interested in teaching can acquire a teaching job in any of the top Dental Colleges. They can also attain a job in research oriented field and also in some other industries. Those who have done special certification have an excellent scope for career as private practitioners, in dental laboratories, dental institutions, and dental hospitals and so on. They also can also take up a job in Armed forces.

2. General Dentist:³⁻⁵

This is the most inevitable choice that most graduates make. Most often a graduate works as a dental associate for a period of 2-6 months under an experienced private practitioner. This period of time the pay will be often “nil” or nominal. But BDS fresher’s must realize that if you get to do observership with a good clinic, where you get to see and learn a lot, then that is a boon in itself. After gaining 2 or more years of experience in private practice you can start a clinic of your own. But in case you want to start one right away, you can do that provided you have family member or spouse already in this field who could guide you through the trials and tribulations of a private practitioner. Around 80% of all dentists doing general dental practice, and 20% are specialists. Since all the dentists are clustered in urban areas, there is lots of scope in rural areas or periphery.

3. Lecturer/Tutor:

One of the other options is joining any accredited dental college as a lecturer or tutor. A BDS graduate can become a lecturer but the pay will be minimal. To become a senior lecturer you have to be an MDS graduate. The pay for a senior lecturer depends hugely on the management of the college you are associated with. But this is a job with dignity and career growth too.

4. Specialist:

To become a specialist, post BDS, you must undergo 3 years of postgraduate studies (MDS). Specialization in any branch can be done and future career prospects are good.

5. Short Service Commissioned Officer with the Defense:

BDS graduates can also join the Indian Armed Forces (army, navy or air force) Dental Corps too as Short Service Commissioned Officers. A life of good salary and various privileges along with the pride of donning the military uniform awaits the ones keenly interested.

6. Researcher⁴:

Clinical research is all set to become the next big thing in India. A large population with a substantial workforce and cost benefits influence multinationals to set up research facilities here. Besides due to the prevalence of a large variety of diseases, including widespread cases of cancer and diabetes India is viewed the world over as the ideal location for clinical research trials for the pharmaceutical industry.

Graduates can join a research institute or undergo a Masters programme in Public Health for better opportunities as a researcher. Post MDS also research can be pursued based on one’s keenness.

Clinical research is an industry where experience counts, thus the longer you are in this field; higher the salary you can expect.

Since you have done BDS you can work as a:

- Principal Investigator
- Co-investigator
- Medical Advisor
- Drug Developer
- Regulatory Affairs Manager or
- Clinical Research Physician
-

7. IAS/IPS/IFS Officer:

Attending the UPSC exams is also a very good option. High salaries and a lot of respect along with career growth is associated with being involved in public service.

8. Hospital Management:

Masters in hospital administration is very much in demand now and these degrees can help you get into the hospital management arena.

9. Opportunities Abroad:

After 2-3 years of experience as a general dentist one can apply for the post of a dentist abroad. It is mandatory to fulfil the eligibility criteria and clear the Dental Board or Ministry of Health examinations of the concerned state before one gets the license to practice.

10. PG Diploma in allied fields:

Post graduate diploma in Forensic or Research methodology can be done online/ distance education learning. Forensic odontology is an upcoming fascinating branch of dentistry which is finding a good place with bright future in dental world.

I heard from many seniors and friends that dentistry is not a good career as there is lots of saturation in this field and scope is also very limited. I always used to reply to them

that in current scenario none of the professional field has a rosy path. It's in one's own ability/potential to explore their professional capabilities to grow and excel in any field. It's not what profession is giving us, it's what we can give to our profession. *It is said that if you love what you do, you never have to work a day in your life.*

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

CHALLENGES:

If we look into dentistry's future, the centrality of this aspect of professional ethics is not likely to change, although the ways in which dentists might violate this trust will probably multiply as funding mechanisms become increasingly complex. It is important that dentists reflect with fresh eyes on their ethical commitments. One challenge is the increased availability of oral health information to the public and the fact that so many people are uncritical of the accuracy of information in the media and on the web. A second is the increase in the amount of health care advertising in many societies. A third is the growth of aesthetic dentistry that differs from standard oral health care in important and ethically significant ways. The fourth is insurance that frequently complicates the explanation of a patient's treatment alternatives and often brings a third party into the treatment decision relationship. The ethical challenges of each of these factors will be considered and ultimately tying it to the central theme of dental professionalism.⁷

CONCLUSION:

Finally I would like to say that *"The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle.' Whatever you decide to do, make sure it makes you happy"*

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