

Trauma in the undergraduate curriculum

EDITORIAL

When I visit a dental school somewhere in the world I often take the chance talking to both teachers and students about trauma teaching at the undergraduate level. I often hear that trauma is taught as a jigsaw puzzle by many specialists and there are often overlaps and repetition in the undergraduate teaching of trauma. Furthermore, conflicting messages are given leading to confusion for many students.

Trauma is not a dental specialty and for this reason trauma teaching is given by the specialties dealing with trauma at the dental schools. It is not surprising that various specialists emphasize their own interests. Surgeons focus on maxillofacial trauma such as bone and soft tissue injuries in their teaching, endodontists often emphasize trauma related to the pulp and pediatric dentists teaching from their perspective. In addition, other specialties also contribute with more pieces in the jigsaw puzzle and the one who is trying to put the pieces together is the student.

A holistic approach would be better and there are some dental schools having started giving trauma teaching as an integrated course given by all specialists together. Traumatology is a suitable subject for such

integrated teaching and also for problem-based learning because tasks can easily be constructed around trauma cases, where the students can search for knowledge and suggest treatment with an integrated approach. This approach seems to be very appreciated and beneficial for the students as it corresponds to the clinical situation when a trauma patient is treated and specialists have to be consulted. Moreover, in many dental schools teaching is often given together with medical students early in their respective programs and problem-based tasks in trauma can therefore be constructed also for medical students who today have little or no teaching in dental injuries, although many of them will most likely in their professional career come in contact with patients seeking advice or emergency care at a medical emergency service, for e.g. avulsed teeth, where correct advice is of utmost importance for the best prognosis. I hope we will see more of the integrated approach in the undergraduate trauma teaching for the benefit of students and patients.

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