

Prospective of Oral Pathology as Profession - A Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Choosing a specialty branch after bachelor's degree is quite intricate, especially in dental field where all branches have their own importance and applicability. So in such circumstances one should assess his own ability and interest rather than any influence from his/her parents, friends and admission counselors and hence accordingly make his/her choice for specialization. The ambitions of an aspiring candidate in a particular specialty in turn contribute a lot for the future of that specialty especially in oral pathology which has the responsibility of diagnosing and eradicating precancerous and cancerous lesions. Study aimed to determine the factors that lead to the choice of oral pathology as career among post graduate students in private and government dental colleges in India.

Material and Methods: A cross-sectional survey was carried out wherein 114 post graduate students responded back using open/closed ended questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of eleven items which included demographic (age and gender) and career choice-related questions. Data was collected and presented as frequency distribution.

Results: Overall majority of students choose oral pathology as choice about 60.5% (69/114) and 39.4% (45/114) were those who got in oral pathology field by chance. 17.5% (20/114) students had family role in getting MDS admission in oral pathology.

Conclusions: Post graduate oral pathology students mostly have chosen oral pathology as a professional career due to their personal interest and influence of family and those who by chance opted oral pathology developed interest in the subject with time. There is also a need to broaden the scope of the specialty and to make it more practical.

Keywords: Oral Pathology, Oral Pathology as Profession

INTRODUCTION

Everything is destined and nothing can be rewritten. There is not an iota of doubt in it. Nevertheless, Almighty has gifted us with brain and wisdom to think and decide as to what is right and what is wrong. One such situation arises when we as students have to choose our post graduate career after completing bachelor in dental surgery (BDS). This often becomes difficult due to many reasons such as family influence, less seats in choice branches, high fee structure etc.

Student's motivations for choosing post graduation in the dental college are of great interest for educators and admission committees. Also parents, relatives, friends and teachers affect the student decision.¹ The problem becomes even more intense particularly when one is choosing a career in a specialty, which is growing such as Oral pathology and microbiology. It is a subject in which the student usually develops a little interest during his/her graduation perhaps due to reasons such as the subject is taught more theoretically and less practically.²

Oral pathology is defined by British Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology as "that part of pathology concerned

with the scientific study of the causes and effects of disease in the Oral and Maxillofacial Complex and an understanding of which is essential for the diagnosis and for the development of rational treatment and preventive programmes".³ Students entering in the field of oral pathology can be divided into two categories. One who chose oral pathology by choice due to their interest and the other who chose oral pathology by chance due to reasons other than their interest. There are many factors which are taken into consideration before deciding any profession such as financial rewards, status in future thereof, nature of profession, peaceful life and interest factor in particular branch.¹ Various studies have been subjected to survey, conducted for studying motives for choosing dentistry as a carrier and other specialities after completing graduation. These studies include those done at University of Toronto⁴ and Israel⁵ etcetera. The prime motive for choosing future career options among dental students as found in various studies ranges from financial security, independent, specialized professional, job satisfaction, status and interest to service to common man.⁶ But no study has been conducted previously to know the reasons for choosing oral pathology as a career option in M.D.S. among the students pursuing Masters in oral pathology and microbiology in India. Thus the aim of our study was to find out reasons for choosing oral pathology and microbiology as a career option in M.D.S in India.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A questionnaire based study was conducted among the student delegates registered for 14th Indian Association Of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologist Convention held in Kolkata, India 2014. Modified questionnaire adapted from Amith HV et al¹ questionnaire was distributed among 325 postgraduate students Out of 325 only 114 reported back with questionnaire. All the students were informed about nitty-gritty of the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee Kothiwal Dental College and Research Centre, Moradabad.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of nine close ended questions and two open ended ones which included demographic data and career in oral pathology choice related questions. To check the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire Cronbach's alpha was used and it was found satisfactory.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics like mean and percentages were used for

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analysis.

RESULTS

A total of 114 students with mean age 30years comprised the study group, which constituted 38.6% (44/114) males and 61.6% (70/114) females (figure-1).

In response to question why student had chosen oral pathology as a career option in M.D.S. 45.5% males and 35% females responded the reason as chance and 54.5% males and 64% females as interest in subject. Overall majority (60.5%:69/114) of students choose oral pathology as choice and 39.4% (45/114) were those who got in oral pathology field by chance. About 48.2% (55/114) were those who were interested in oral pathology, 26% (30/114) were those who were not able to get admission in other branches and 17.5% (20/114) students had family role in getting MDS admission in oral pathology. About 30% female students and 22.7% males thought that oral pathology as a profession can help them in making money for future as well as settled life; 34.2% females and 43.1% males thought that it can give reputation in society; 2.2% males and 1.4% females thought that getting into this specialty, they can help patients. Females (42.8%) were also more interested in oral pathology due to the reason that mostly there is no direct interaction with patients while as 31.8% males had the same reason. 40% females also choose oral pathology as they were not good in clinical work while only 11.3% males were. Lab work was more fond in case of males (56.85%) than those of females (11.4%). Overall 52.6% students thought that oral pathology includes histopathological diagnosis, clinical pathology and microbiology. Surprising it was observed that regarding awareness about career and future prospectus of MDS in Oral Pathology during BDS, only 34.2%(39/114) students had awareness about oral pathology as a career and 65.7% (75/114) students were unaware about oral pathology being future career. Most of the postgraduate students (about 43.8%) were planning to join academics after completion while as lesser of them (17.5%) were planning to go for private histopathological diagnosis practice only whereas 21.9% might pursue both general dentistry and histopathological practice. Only 16.6% (19/114) students were planning for further research projects. 53.5%(61/114) students found oral pathology as very interesting subject after getting admission in oral pathology, 36.8% (42/114) found the subject as good and only 9.6%(11/114) students found oral pathology as boring subject (figure-2; table-1,2).

Two open ended questions were also included in the questionnaire. Regarding the decreasing admissions in oral pathology in dental colleges in India, most of the students had common thinking that oral pathology is more theoretical and less clinical; and students from private dental colleges also mentioned no-stipend being given as the main reason for decreasing admissions. Regarding the opportunities for oral pathologists other than academic jobs in dental colleges, most of the postgraduate students mentioned that collaboration should be made with general pathologists, permission of hematology practice from government, inclusion of forensic odontology, laser courses and research in oncology field.

DISCUSSION

The age of the students ranged from 24 - 36 years with mean age of 30 years. The participants of the study comprised 44 males

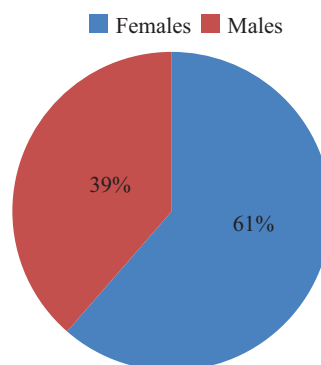


Figure-1: Gender Distribution

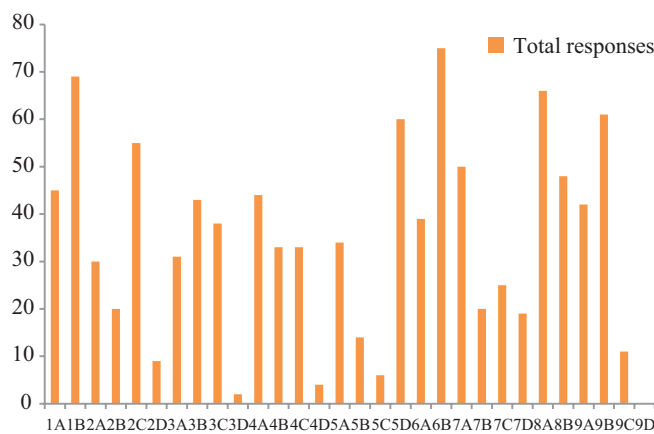


Figure-2: Total responses

and 70 females. Considering the response to question as to why oral pathology was chosen as a career option in M.D.S., there seems to be an encouraging trend in having interest, as maximum number of students 60% (69/114) have the prior interest in the subject, among which majority (64%) are females. This shows the trend of a female dominated professional factor in post graduation in oral pathology nowadays. The reason for the less number of males in post graduate course in oral pathology may be responsible for the fact that males are interested in surgery oriented clinical subjects since beginning of their career. Psychologically speaking, males suffer from superiority complex while they choose clinical subjects in post graduation. Interest in the oral pathology stands as the second reason for choosing the subject. 48.2% (55/114) of them highlighted the fact that oral pathology and microbiology subject is liked by most of the students. This trend is good in the perspective of there being still a dearth of oral pathologist across India in professional dental colleges due to increasing oral cancer menace day by day.

Coming to the awareness regarding career and future prospects of the students before post- graduation, a whopping percentage of 65.78 (75/114) were not aware of the future prospects of the subject before counseling highlighting the reason that during graduation(BDS) students are not given the opportunity to diagnose simple lesions. If given the opportunity, maximum students might develop interest in oral pathology during their BDS course only.

Academics and teaching remains on the forefront as 43.8% (50/114) are interested in joining academics. This was dominated by females as 42.8% (30/114) females were interested in joining

Questions	Males	Females	Total
Q1: Oral pathology as a career in MDS was by			
a) Chance	20(45.5%)	25(35%)	45
b) Choice	24(54.5%)	45(64.3%)	69
Q2: What were the reasons for choosing oral pathology as your career:			
a) Unable to get admission in other branches	20(45.5%)	10(14.28%)	30
b) Family role/influence	5(11.4%)	15(21.42%)	20
c) Interested in Oral pathology	15(34%)	40(57.14%)	55
d) Others reasons	4(9.09%)	5(7.12%)	9
Q3: Oral pathology as a profession can			
a) help me in making money and well settled life.	10(22.72%)	21(30%)	31
b) reputation in society	19(43.1%)	24(34.2%)	43
c) help people/patients	14(31.8%)	24(34.2%)	38
d) others	1(2.2%)	1(1.4%)	2
Q4: Oral pathology suits me because:			
a) No direct interaction with patients	14(31.8%)	30(42.8%)	44
b) Not good in clinics	5(11.3%)	28(40%)	33
c) I like oral pathology/lab work	25(56.8%)	8(11.4%)	33
d) Others.	0	4(5.7%)	04
Q5: Oral pathology is confined to:			
a) Histopathological diagnosis	13(29.5%)	21(30%)	34
b) Clinical Pathology	04(9.09%)	10(14.2%)	14
c) Microbiology	3(6.8%)	3(4.2%)	6
d) All	24(54.5%)	36(51.4%)	60
Q6: Were you aware about career and future prospectus of Oral Pathology during BDS:			
a) Yes	14(31.8%)	25(35.7%)	39
b) No	30(68.1%)	45(64.2%)	75
Q7: After completing your P.G would you like to			
a) Join academics	20(45.4%)	30(42.8%)	50
b) Private histopathological practice	05(11.3%)	15(21.4%)	20
c) Pursue general dentistry clinic and histopathological practice	15(34.09%)	10(14.2%)	25
d) Joining a research institute	04(9.09%)	15(21.4%)	19
Q8: If again you are given option would you like to join MDS in oral pathology?			
a) Yes	24(54.5%)	42(60%)	66
b) No	20(45.4%)	28(40%)	48
Q9: How are you finding the subject right now?			
a) It is good	15(34.09%)	27(38.5%)	42
b) It is very interesting	25(56.8%)	36(51.4%)	61
c) It is boring	04(9.09%)	7(10%)	11
d) Any other	0	0	0
What is your opinion about decreasing admissions in Oral Pathology?			
➤ More theoretical and volatile.			
➤ Less clinical exposure and less jobs.			
➤ No Stipend in private dental colleges.			
What can be the other opportunities for oral pathologist other than academic job in a dental college?			
➤ Collaboration with general pathologist.			
➤ Opening histopathology lab and dental clinic in a combine form.			
➤ Inclusion of forensic odontology and laser courses in oral pathology.			
➤ Research oncology field.			

colleges. The reason may be females in India do not have upper hand in clinics due to social and cultural reasons.

However the most significant response regarding the question "If again you are given option, would you like to join MDS in oral pathology", 57% students were found willing to join MDS in oral pathology, clearly indicating the depth and interest in the subject developed by the postgraduate students.

Overall attitude towards the specialty was significantly less among male students as compared to females, which may be due to their delusion about oral pathology as a non-clinical specialty and not including clinical training and so "loss of

hands" on dental practice. Other reasons regarding less interest towards oral pathology among male students may be lower income and more dependency on the job as compared to other specialties of dentistry.⁷

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study suggest that most of the students opted oral pathology as choice and those who by chance opted oral pathology by chance as their future career also developed interest in the subject. During the formative years (BDS); the student should be given chance to get involved

Modified Questionnaire
Oral pathology as a career was by c) Chance d) Choice
What were the reasons for choosing oral pathology as your career: e) Unable to get admission in other branches f) Family role/influence g) Interested in Oral pathology h) Others reasons
Oral pathology as a profession can a) help me in making money and well settled life. b) reputation in society c) help people/patients d) others
Oral pathology suits me because: e) No direct interaction with patients f) Not good in clinics g) I like oral pathology/lab work h) Others.
Oral pathology is confined to: e) Histopathological diagnosis f) Clinical Pathology g) Microbiology h) All or none
Were you aware about career and future prospectus of Oral Pathology during BDS: c) Yes d) No
After completing your P.G would you like to e) Join academics f) Private histopathological practice g) Pursue general dentistry clinic h) Joining a research institute i) Going abroad for higher studies j) Others
If again you are given option would you like to join MDS in oral pathology? a) Yes b) No
How are you finding the subject right now? a) It is good b) It is very interesting c) It is boring d) Any other
What is your opinion about decreasing admissions in Oral Pathology?
What can be the other opportunities for oral pathologist other than academic job in a dental college?

into histopathological diagnosis of the lesions be it the simpler ones; so that students get acquainted with the histopathological world of diagnosis and develop their keen interest in the same. There is also a need to broaden the scope of the specialty and to make it more practical such as laser biopsy/treatment courses can be added as super specialty disciplines.

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