

# Budding Dentist on the Road to Success or In a Blind Tunnel?

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## Abstract

**Background:** One of the known stresses amongst the dental students in India is the uncertainty of the career and fear of unemployment after graduation; this might result in declining student academic performance.

**Aims and Objectives:** The objectives of this exploratory study are to investigate the motives behind choosing dentistry as a career option and as well determine the awareness regarding the future prospects of Dentistry amongst the dental students of the Uttarakhand state.

**Materials and Methods:** A questionnaire comprising of open as well as close-ended questions were distributed amongst 500 dental students of Uttarakhand. The response to the questionnaire so obtained were analyzed.

**Results:** 54.90% opted for BDS because they could not secure a seat for MBBS. 69.60% feel stressed when they think of future. 56.12% want to go for a postgraduate degree. 39.95% want to go for government jobs. 29.16% see a more secure future in own practice. 90% agree that they lack awareness about future prospects and feel the need to introduce an orientation course in the curriculum.

**Conclusion:** The present scenario can improve by conduction of Orientation courses in all dental colleges to improve the awareness of students about the available career options, by establishment of counseling cells to combat stress amongst dental students, by creating more jobs in the government sector, and last but not the least, by increasing the number of post graduate seats in government dental colleges.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Dentists, Future, Prospects, Stress

## INTRODUCTION

Dentistry is no more the extraction of teeth only, but it is an emerging branch of medicine with the emphasis on conservation of tooth, replacement of teeth with life like appearance and dental implants. In ancient history of Indian medicine and ayurveda, dentistry was having its existence as a part and parcel of medicine for good health as “The oral cavity is mirror of good health of a person.” Today, dentistry is not only relieving patients from pain but also improving their smiles. The changing trends of dentistry is catering public figures and celebrities by aesthetic and profile enhancement.

Despite the pace at which dentistry is moving forward the biggest question remains, “Why is the new brigade of budding dentists in dilemma?”, I have been asked this

question several times, sometimes by my parents and relatives and sometimes by my friends who are in the in the same profession. In the United Kingdom and United States of America, dentists are amongst the 5% highest paid professionals<sup>1</sup> whereas in India dentists are struggling for earning a decent livelihood, baring a few.

Although, there is a high burden of oral diseases in the country but there are few job opportunities in India, this amounts to stress amongst the dental students. This stress of the future prospects and fear of unemployment might/ can result in poor academic performance of students.

Recognizing the importance of General Health in the process of economic and social development and improving the quality of life of our citizens, the Government of India

has resolved to launch the National Rural Health Mission and National Urban Health Mission programs to carry out necessary architectural correction in the basic health care delivery system. Similar programs to improve the availability and access to quality oral and dental health care will prove beneficial for people as well as the dental professionals.

With increasing awareness amongst the urban population and the stiff competition that graduates face in cities, there has been an increase in the number of aspirants for postgraduate courses. Since the number of seats in various postgraduate courses is very few in proportion to the large number of graduates each year, many of the new graduates immigrate to other countries to fulfill their aspiration.<sup>2</sup> Number of seats available for MDS is only around 3000 compared to 25,000 BDS students graduating every year.

When in the entire West, dentistry is regarded as a flourishing industry, why are budding Indian dentists in stress?

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The following study was designed with the following Aims and Objectives:

- 1) To analyze the reasons for stress amongst new generation dentists.
- 2) To investigate why students choose dentistry.
- 3) To find out how aware a dental student is about his future prospects.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional questionnaire based anonymous study was conducted amongst a study population of 500 undergraduate dental students from the first to fifth years enrolled in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) program in Uttarakhand including students of two dental colleges namely Seema Dental College and Hospital, Rishikesh and Uttaranchal Dental and Medical Research Institute, Dehradun. The study was conducted in December 2012.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences statistical software (SPSS version 16.0). Since the present study is a computer aided survey sometimes also erroneously referred to as double blind trials, the software will not cause any type of bias between the researcher and the subject.

### RESULTS

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed and 408 were obtained giving an overall response rate of 81.7%.

When we asked the students the reasons behind choosing dentistry as a career option, the response was as follows (Figure 1):

- 54.9% students owned up that they chose dentistry because they could not secure a seat for MBBS.
- 20.8% students said they simply wanted the title doctor before their names.
- Whereas, only 13.2% of the students said that dentistry is their career of interest.

Future prospects: matter of stress?

- 69.60% students said they feel stressed when they think of their future (Figure 2).
- Whereas, 92.2% of these students felt that this stress is interfering with their academic performance (Figure 3).

When we asked the students what they wanted to do after BDS (Figure 4):

- 56.12% students said they want to do MDS.
- 39.95% students said that they want to go for government jobs.
- Whereas, 29.2% students said they see a more secure future in private practice.
- 66.17% feel the need to migrate to other countries for better opportunities (Figure 5).
- Shockingly, 90.2% students admitted that they lack information about future prospects (Figure 6).

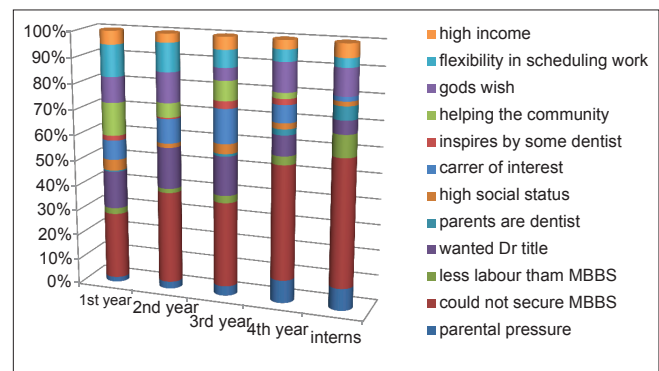


Figure 1: Dentistry as a career

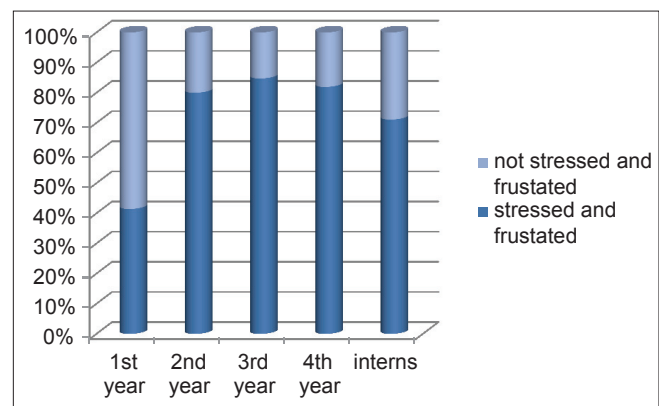


Figure 2: Level of stress in relation to future prospects

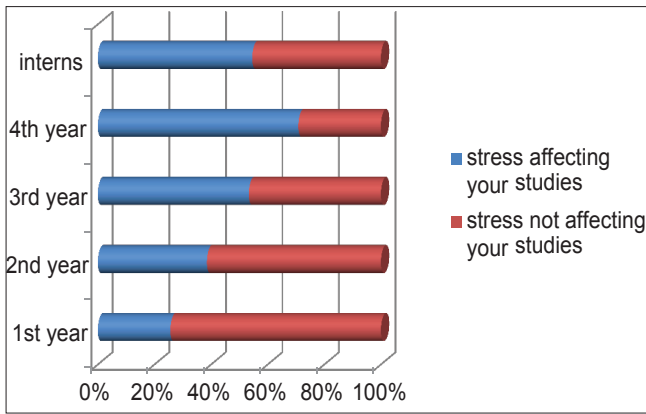


Figure 3: Interference in academics due to stress

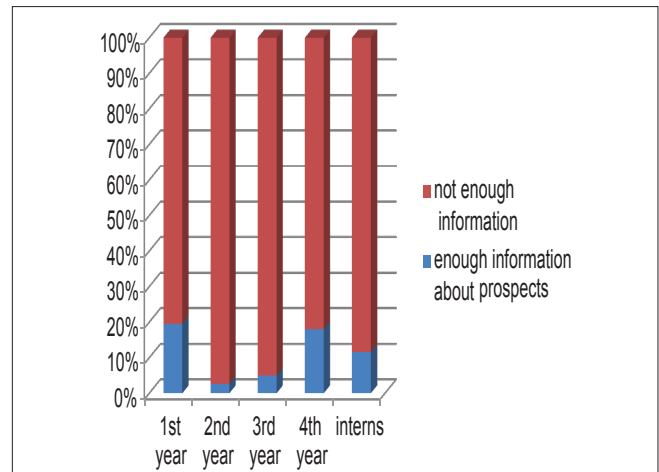


Figure 6: Awareness about prospects

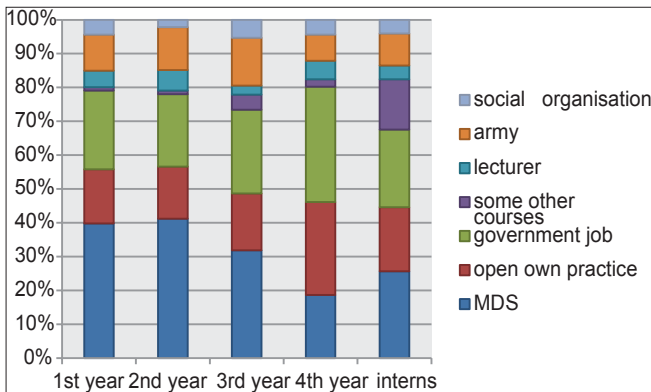


Figure 4: Future plans

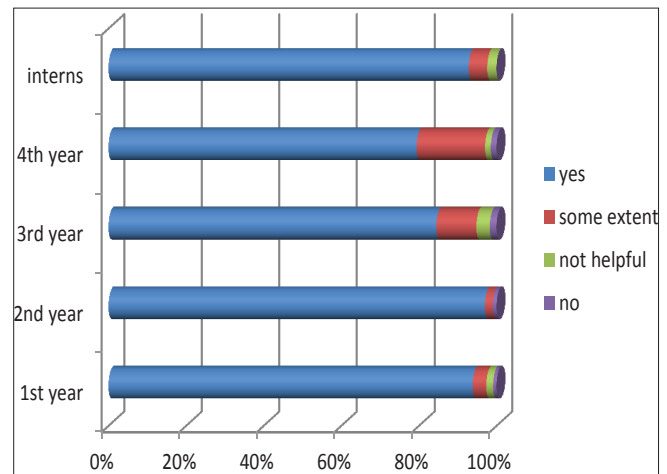


Figure 7: Need of orientation course

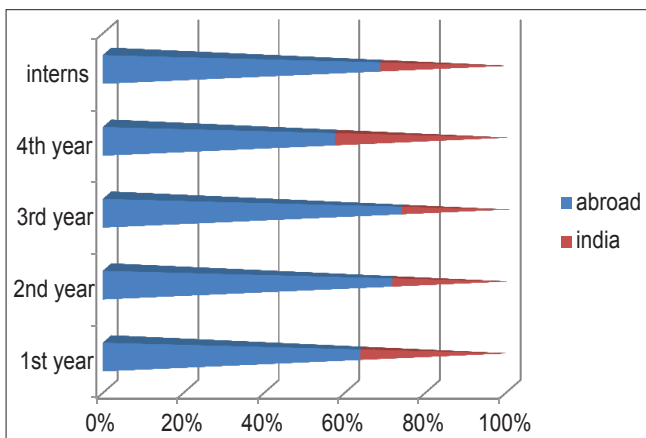


Figure 5: Need for migration to abroad for better prospects

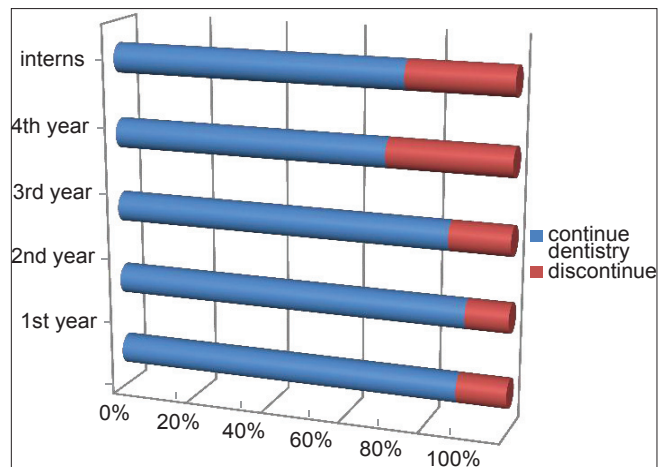


Figure 8: Wish to continue with dentistry as a career

- And 89% students expressed the need for an orientation course to be included in the curriculum (Figure 7).
- The silver lining in this dark scenario is that 83.03% students want to continue their career in the field of dentistry (Figure 8).

## DISCUSSION

In order to find out a few answers, we came across interesting and thought provoking statistics. According to

our study majority of students opted for dentistry because they could not secure a seat for MBBS, this clearly shows the declining interest of the students of Uttarakhand in the field. Similar studies conducted in Bhubaneswar and Mysore also showed comparable results. A reduction in

overall applications to the undergraduate course has been seen during the last decade, although fluctuations have occurred from year to year.<sup>2</sup> So, it is essential to keep up momentum in the drive to attract suitable applicants for the course. This can be done by increasing the quality instead of quantity of Dental Education in India.

The prevalence of stress amongst the dental students due to worries of future is seen to be increasing year by year. A study with prime objective of determining the perceived causes of stress among undergraduate dental students of the academic year 2009–10, at the College of Dentistry, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia said that one of the major causes of stress amongst dental students is “Fear of not having possibility to pursue a post graduate dental education program.”

Increased awareness of Indian patients has raised their expectations from the dental practitioners. Awareness about the dental education among Indian population has also decreased the charm of BDS degree alone and more and more patients try to consult a specialist for their problems. This is the reason why the aim of most dental graduates is to get the master's degree (MDS). This has been proved by various studies in India as well as overseas. According to a survey of dental students of Gandhi Dental College and Hospital, Bhubaneswar around 40% of students in first year of graduation were interested in pursuing post graduation. Increasing trend towards post graduation was observed with the seniority and almost 70 % students from the fourth year of graduation have voted for master degree. But the disappointing ratio of 1:10 (MDS seats: number of dental graduated passing every year) is a bottleneck in the career prospects of a dentist.<sup>3-5</sup>

A large population of candidates wants to go for government jobs but are disappointed due to very limited vacancies. Astonishingly, the Dentist: Population ratio in India is as low as one dentist per 11249.50 people. So, according to the data dentists should be in great demand.<sup>6</sup>

The National Urban and Rural Health mission programs provide effective health care to the rural as well as poor urban population, especially the disadvantaged groups including women and children, by improving access, enabling community ownership and demand for services, strengthening public health systems for efficient service delivery, enhancing equity and accountability and promoting decentralisation.<sup>7</sup> These programs are not only beneficial for the people but also provide employment to healthcare professionals. Unfortunately, there are no such program for oral and dental healthcare. In a country where 60% have never visited a dentist; over 50% not concerned about preventing

or curing dental problems; almost 30% do not use any oral care product; 75% of toothpaste users brush only once or less than once a day; over 50% of rural India does not use a toothbrush to clean teeth, such programs are a must.<sup>8</sup>

Majority of the students according to the survey, would like to migrate to other countries if given a chance. The reason for migration is the monetary benefits that the dentists get in most of the developed countries, especially the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These are the main four countries that receive the greatest immigration from India. Out of the 63 percent of dentists in New Zealand who are from overseas, for example, 15 percent are Indians.<sup>2</sup> The facilities in the developed countries are more advanced, easily accessible, and promising as compared to those available in India. Those aspiring to rise in research and academics prefer to go abroad.

Our research should be viewed with the following limitation in mind, all collected data were self reported and therefore not verifiable. In particular, there was some inconsistency in the collected data (i.e. participants provided multiple answers to questions that asked for only one answer), indicating that some of the reported information was unreliable.

## CONCLUSION

Dental students of Uttarakhand have poor awareness about the future prospects which is a matter of stress and has direct impact on academics and we think the scenario throughout the country may be same as the numbers of qualified dental surgeons are increasing every day. We can't say there is lack of opportunities for the young dentists but what we need is a systematic approach to give them the right direction. Students are aspiring to do MDS but are discouraged seeing the lack of government seats. There are lesser openings for dental surgeons in government and public sector jobs. If we see the scenario of private practice there is an accumulation of private practitioners in urban areas depriving the rural population from basic facilities. Therefore, we may suggest the Policy makers of Indian Health System like Government of India, various state governments and Dental Council of India to look into the matter to increase the number of MDS seats in government as well as private colleges under government quota; create jobs in the government, private and semi-government sectors; conduction of orientation courses regarding future prospects in the various Dental colleges of India. Counselling cell in each and every dental college to combat the stress amongst dental students. Programs similar to NRHM and NUHM for dental and oral healthcare should also be launched.

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