

Orthodontic education in Pakistan; a current challenge

There are a number of challenges in the orthodontic profession in Pakistan. Out of the many challenges, I would prioritize orthodontic education to be considered as the most important challenge facing our profession currently and in the future. The growth and quality of orthodontic care in Pakistan will and always depend upon the quality of orthodontic education imparted to undergraduate students and especially postgraduate residents.

Although orthodontic education has greatly improved over years however there are a number of issues of great concern, and let me address those concerns in a manner of how I think.

The nature of the orthodontic profession and the aspirations of the students entering the profession are changing. The educational system is not responding efficiently to meet student or national needs. The incomes generated from orthodontic departments are not utilized for orthodontic benefit; instead the financial resource is utilized in the general pool of the dental school. This creates a crisis particularly in orthodontic education when funds are not available to attract and retain full time educators, motivated residents and researchers.

Undergraduate orthodontic education is not too worrying. However the postgraduate orthodontic education is a greater challenge. The real challenge is of training good orthodontic clinicians. Currently the highest levels of orthodontic qualifications in Pakistan are FCPS and MDS. FCPS is a fellowship awarded by the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan, while MDS is a degree awarded by the Universities. Both these programs have a relatively similar curriculum but different dynamics. Resident to supervisor ratio is a point to ponder upon.

Increasing the number of students in orthodontic programs is important but should only be allowed with increasing faculty. Better selection and training of residents with emphasis on quality patient care and helping patients should be the priority. Recruiting staff that have integrity to be willing to work full time with motivation to teach is of upmost importance.

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