

SERVICE

CHOICES

INDEPENDENCE

Something to Smile About



Careers in the Dental Profession

DENTISTRY

PRESTIGE

CREATIVITY

VARIETY

ADA American
Dental
Association®



Would you like an opportunity to:

Join one of the most respected professions in the country?

Provide a needed health service?

Use artistic talent as well as scientific knowledge?

Create healthy smiles?

Own your own business?

Dentistry offers many rewarding career options combining science and technology with helping people enhance and maintain their oral health. Tomorrow's dentists will be on the cutting edge of advanced technology, making the practice of dentistry even more challenging and rewarding.

The information in this brochure will acquaint you with a variety of career options dentistry has to offer. You'll discover why dentistry is truly a unique career!

Dentistry—A Unique Opportunity

SERVICE TO OTHERS: Dentists help people maintain and improve their oral health, quality of life and appearance. Dentists receive a great deal of personal satisfaction by providing an essential community health service, by educating future dentists and by doing valuable research. Dentists treat everyone—the healthy, the ill, the young, the elderly, the disadvantaged and those with special needs.

BALANCED LIFESTYLE: Dentistry is an appealing career because it offers the flexibility to balance a professional life and personal goals.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT: Dentistry affords the opportunity to be one's own boss and own a dental practice. As independent entrepreneurs, dentists set and maintain their own regular hours.

EARNING POTENTIAL/DEMAND: A dentist's average income is in the highest 5% of U.S. family income, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The demand for dental care is projected to grow. As baby boomers age, they will continue to need preventive services and many baby boomers will require maintenance on existing dental work. Large numbers of dentists are expected to retire in the next 20 years, creating a need for new dentists.

STATUS AND PRESTIGE: Dentists are socially conscious, talented, civic-minded professionals who work with community leaders and other health professionals to promote oral health care. Dentistry has a distinguished history of leadership in improving world health.

CREATIVITY: As artists, dentists combine keen visual memory, excellent judgment of space and shape and a high degree of manual dexterity in the delivery of patient services. Computer applications complement scientific knowledge and technical skills.

VARIETY: Dentistry is changing rapidly, creating many opportunities and challenges. Dentists treat a diverse group of patients in a variety of settings using a variety of techniques and procedures.



Detection of Diseases

Dentists are often the first health care providers to recognize and identify a number of illnesses—including cancer and cardiovascular problems. Research suggests an increasing number of links between oral diseases and other health concerns.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Dentists diagnose and treat conditions affecting the teeth, tongue, gums, lips and jaws. Exciting technologies, such as digital radiography and laser systems, along with enhanced new materials and techniques, can be used to correct dental problems.

Surgical Restoration

Dentists perform trauma surgery, place implants, graft tissue to repair, restore and maintain the teeth, gums, and oral structures that have been lost or damaged by accidents or disease.

Cosmetic Improvement

Dentists improve their patient's appearance by using a wide variety of modern dental materials and equipment to help patients feel better about their smiles.

Prevention/Education

Dentists educate patients and the general public on how to maintain oral health and prevent disease. Dental professionals play a leadership role in implementing community-based preventive programs, such as community water fluoridation, sealant programs or oral cancer screening.

Research

Dentists are involved as scientists to further the knowledge of oral diseases, treatment techniques and materials used to correct dental problems.

Future Opportunities



Demand for dental care continues to grow due to the increasing number of older adults keeping their teeth longer, increased awareness of oral health care and the need for additional dental services. Advancements in technology like lasers and computer-assisted diagnosis allow dentists to provide more effective treatments.

Exceptional career opportunities exist for underrepresented minority students. The American Dental Association is strongly committed to attaining diversity in the dental profession to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of American society. The role of minority dentists is vitally important in eliminating disparities in oral health and access to care. To achieve a more balanced workforce to adequately serve the public, the dental profession is interested in attracting African-Americans,

Hispanics, American Indians and other under-represented minorities to careers in dentistry.

Career opportunities for women in dentistry are especially favorable. More women are now entering dental school than ever before. They represent more than 40% of students enrolled in U.S. dental schools.



Dentistry Career Options

Dentistry offers stimulating career options. In addition to private practice, excellent opportunities exist in teaching and research, careers with government agencies or in industry.

PRIVATE PRACTICE: Many dentists work either in solo private practice or in partnerships with other dentists. The majority of private practice dentists own their own practices.

ACADEMIC DENTISTRY: An academic dentistry career combines teaching, research, community service and patient care. Faculty members work in an intellectually stimulating and exciting academic environment. Career opportunities for academic dentists are excellent at this time. Additional information is available at the American Dental Education Association's (ADEA) website, <http://www.adea.org>.

PUBLIC HEALTH DENTISTRY: This career focuses on community settings rather than private practice. Promoting dental health, developing health policy and preventing disease are the major roles of a public health dentist. Numerous opportunities exist in research and teaching within public health dentistry. The U.S. Public Health Service offers dentists an opportunity to provide dental care in unique cultural environments (e.g., an Indian Reservation, Coast Guard base, or Federal Prison).

RESEARCH: Research careers offer opportunities to generate new knowledge and be on the cutting edge of scientific discoveries that ultimately impact patient care. Some of the latest research improving patient care includes lasers in surgery, implants to replace damaged bone and computerized x-rays. Many researchers are faculty at universities while others work in federal facilities, such as the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), www.nidcr.nih.gov, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), www.nih.gov, or in private industry. A career in research requires an advanced degree or additional training beyond the dental degree.

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARE: Dentists provide services to populations abroad and work for such agencies as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Many dentists volunteer to bring dentistry to aid people in third world countries.

HOSPITAL DENTISTRY: Hospital dentists treat patients with medical conditions and disabilities alongside physician colleagues, often in operating rooms and emergency departments. Hospital dentists usually have a strong interest in medicine and collaborative care and have spent a year or more training in a hospital-based setting after dental school.

A Career as a Dental Specialist

The majority of the 164,000 practicing dentists today are general practitioners. The remainder (about 20%) are dental specialists who limit their practices to one of the nine ADA recognized dental specialties. The nine dental specialties are: Dental Public Health, Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics and Prosthodontics. Definitions of the ADA-recognized dental specialties are located at <http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/specialty/index.html>. In addition to four years of dental school, two or more additional years of dental specialty education are required.

Preparing for a Dental Education

- Before making a decision to become a dentist, find out about the profession. Job shadow or volunteer at your family dentist's office, or visit a dental specialist such as an orthodontist's or pediatric dentist's office. Contact your local dental society. (The American Dental Association (ADA) can provide contact information for the dental societies). Find out if there are any programs for high school or college students at nearby dental schools.



- While in high school, get a broad exposure to math and science; enroll in college preparatory courses such as chemistry, biology and algebra. Liberal arts courses are helpful also.
- General biology, organic and inorganic chemistry, biochemistry and physics are recommended courses to take in college. Majoring in science is not a must, but completion of the pre dental science requirements is necessary.
- A college undergraduate degree is recommended in preparation for dental school. Most dental students have completed four years of college.
- Contact several dental schools and find out about the school's specific admission requirements. A counselor or advisor who is knowledgeable about the health professions can assist you with dentistry career information. Ask about the courses you should be taking and other admission information. Many science or pre dental clubs are available to offer additional information on dental careers.

Applying to Dental School

- Admissions committees review credentials such as academic qualifications, the results from the Dental Admissions Test (DAT), grade point average (GPA), information from letters of evaluation, personal interviews and dental office shadowing experiences. Keep in mind that these are general admissions criteria and other admission requirements can vary from school to school.





- It is recommended that students take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) a year prior to seeking admission to dental school. This computerized test measures general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information and perceptual ability. Completion of at least one year of college-level courses in biology, and general and organic chemistry is recommended for participation in the examination program. Information on the Dental Admission Test is available at <http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat.asp>.
- Most dental schools require personal interviews with candidates to assess qualities such as desire to help people, self-confidence, ability to meet challenges, ability to get along with people and capacity to work independently. The personal interview also provides an opportunity to ask about the school.
- Apply for admission at least a year in advance of the planned enrollment date. Most dental schools participate in the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS). For a fee, students can subscribe to this service and complete a single application to apply to multiple dental schools. An online application to the schools participating in AADSAS can be completed at <http://aadsas.adea.org>. The AADSAS toll-free number is 800-353-2237.

The Dental School Program

Earning a doctoral degree in dentistry usually requires four academic years of study. Dental schools award the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD). The four years of study leading to the DDS or DMD degree progress as follows:

Years one and two

- Studies begin with classroom and laboratory instruction in basic health sciences (including anatomy, biochemistry, histology, microbiology, pharmacology and physiology), with an emphasis on dental aspects.
- Students learn the basic principles of oral diagnosis and treatment, may practice on manikins and models, and may begin treating patients later in the second year.

Years three and four

- Students treat patients under the supervision of licensed dental faculty. Procedures cover the



broad scope of general dentistry and include opportunities to work in a variety of settings, e.g., community clinics, hospitals and outpatient clinics.

- Practice management courses include instruction in effective communication skills, the use of allied dental personnel and business management.

A list of the ADA Commission-accredited U.S. and Canadian dental schools is available at www.ada.org/prof/ed/programs/schools/index.html.

Financing a Dental Education

Most dental students cover educational expenses through loan programs, scholarships and grants. The American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) have developed a package for dental students about federal and private loans. Information on these loan programs is available at 800-225-6783. Financial aid officers at dental schools also provide information about student loan opportunities.

Information on ADA scholarship assistance programs for dental students is available at www.ada.org/ada/charitable/endow/minority.html.

Dental education is a good investment. It compares favorably with that of other health care professionals; the hourly wage of dentists exceeds that of family physicians, pediatricians and psychiatrists. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, dentistry is the sixth highest paying occupation requiring a college degree or higher.

Getting a License

All states require dentists to be licensed to practice. In most states, a candidate must graduate from a U. S. dental school accredited by the ADA Commission on Dental Accreditation and pass written and practical examinations to qualify for licensure.

For Further Information

Coordinator, Career Guidance
Council on Dental Education and Licensure
American Dental Association
312-440-2390
<http://www.ada.org/public/careers/index.asp>

American Dental Education Association (ADEA)
202-667-9433
www.adea.org

Official Guide to Dental Schools
Opportunities for Minority Students in the United States
Dental Schools
(These publications are available for purchase from ADEA).

American Student Dental Association (ASDA)
312-440-2795
www.asdanet.org

The ASDA Handbook: A Resource Guide for Predental Students
(This publication is available for purchase from ASDA).

Hispanic Dental Association (HDA)
800-852-7921
www.hdassoc.org

National Dental Association (NDA)
202-588-1697
www.ndaonline.org

Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID)
5320 West Sahara Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89146
www.aaip.org/about/said.htm



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