

Current Status of Post-Graduate Dental Hygiene Education in the United States

Aram Lee¹, Won-Gyun Chung² and Hyun-Sun Jeon^{3*}

¹Department Dental Hygiene, Yonsei Univerisy Graduate School, 36426 20, Ilsan-ro, Wonju, Gangwon-do, Korea; aramaram@yonsei.ac.kr

²Department Dental Hygiene, Wonju College of Medicine, Yonsei Univerisy, 36426 20, Ilsan-ro, Wonju, Gangwon-do, Korea; wgchung@yonsei.ac.kr

³Department Dental Hygiene, Yeosu Institute of Technology, 338 Sejong-ro, Yeosu-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea; yudhjs@naver.com

Abstract

Objectives: The aim of this study was to explore post-graduate dental hygiene education in the United States in order to acquire data and information that could be utilized for advancing dental hygiene education and stimulating the field of dental hygiene research in Korea. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** Extensive literature review was conducted and official websites of all 22 schools that offer post-graduate dental hygiene programs and ADHA were utilized to obtain statistical data and significant information. Retrieved data were analyzed via Frequency analysis and descriptive analysis and then, visualized utilizing SPSS 20.0 for windows and Microsoft excel program. **Findings:** According to the official website of ADHA, based on survey data utilized in 2014, there are 332 dental hygiene programs (53 Baccalaureate level programs and 287 associate level programs) in America. Data revealed that 17 schools (77%) are offering Master of Science in Dental Hygiene (MSDH) while other five schools have related programs such as Master of Science (M.Sc.) or Master of Health Science (MHS). As these postgraduate dental hygiene programs' most significant objective is to train and educate dental hygienists or dental hygiene students to succeed as educators, oral health professionals and researchers, they put a great emphasis on diversity, social and cultural sensitivity, health care policy, interpersonal collaboration advocacy, health informatics and technology, health promotion and disease prevention, leadership, professionalism, program development and administration, scholarly inquiry and research methodology. **Improvements/Applications:** Most post-graduate programs that conduct dental hygiene education in the states seem to focus on preparing their students to become educators, administrators and researchers in the field of dental hygiene.

Keywords: Dental Hygiene Education, Dental Hygiene Student, Distance Education, Master of Science in Dental Hygiene (MSDH), Postgraduate Curricula

1. Introduction

Over the last 50 years, members of the field of dental hygiene in Korea have devoted themselves to develop standardized curricula for dental hygiene education that could satisfy both the increasing needs of oral care in Korea and constantly shifting dental hygiene education paradigm. Various studies on dental hygiene school undergraduate courses were carried out such as the implement status of dental hygiene curriculum in Korea and the comparison with the US ADA standard¹, Development of Korean standard dental hygiene

curriculum², the actual condition of operating dental hygiene curriculum between Korea and America³.

Although numerous studies on dental hygiene education in the states were conducted in Korea, studies that focus on post-graduate dental hygiene programs in the states have been very limited. Therefore, this study focused on all of the 22 schools in the states that offer post-graduate programs in the field of dental hygiene in order to obtain valuable data that could be applied to dental hygiene schools in Korea that are planning to start post-graduate programs or aiming to improve their programs.

* Author for correspondence

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Test materials

In order to accurately investigate current status of post-graduate dental hygiene education in the states, official data and statistic records from the official website of ADHA (American Dental Hygiene Association) were utilized. Information on conferred degrees upon graduation, learning objectives, curricula and each school’s distance education status were obtained from the ADHA website and each school’s official websites. The overall process of this study is represented in Figure 1.

2.2 Test Methods

To conduct descriptive statistics, collected data and information were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0 for Windows.

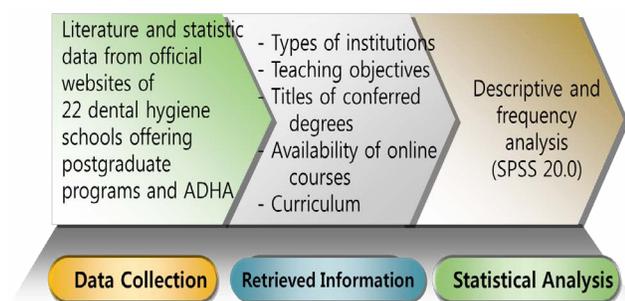


Figure 1. Study overview.

3. Results

According to the official website of ADHA, based on survey data utilized in 2014, there are 332 dental hygiene programs (53 Baccalaureate level programs and 287 associate level programs) in the states⁴. In addition, there are 55 dental hygiene schools that offer degree completion programs⁵ and 22 schools with master’s degree programs for dental hygiene students⁶⁻⁸. Based on this data, the relative ratio of the number of master’s degree programs to the number of undergraduate programs in terms of dental hygiene programs in the states is about 0.066 (22:332) which is lower than that of South Korea (0.111). The names of schools that are included in the current study as they offer master’s degree programs for dental hygiene students are listed in Table 1. Core competencies that are heavily focused in postgraduate dental hygiene education in the states are diversity, social and cultural sensitivity, health care policy, interpersonal collaboration advocacy, health informatics

and technology, health promotion and disease prevention, leadership, professionalism, program development and administration, scholarly inquiry and research⁶. When classified in terms of their affiliated schools or universities, the 22 postgraduate dental hygiene schools or programs are divided into three groups; 11 schools (50%) affiliated to schools of dentistry, 3 schools (14%) affiliated to dental hygiene colleges, and 8 schools affiliated to other types of schools or educative institutions such as schools of allied health. Among these 22 schools 17 schools (77%) are offering Master of Science in Dental Hygiene (MSDH) while other five schools have related programs such as M.Sc. or Master of Health Science (MHS). Another interesting point is that among these 22 schools, 16 schools offered some online distance courses that are required for master’s degree in dental hygiene while 5 schools allow students to finish their master’s program completely online⁹. These schools seem to put relatively strong emphasis on research methodology and application, public health and leadership through their curricula offering numerous subjects and courses related to the topics. This trend seems to have a thread of connection with the fact that one of the main objectives of these postgraduate programs for dental hygiene students is to train and educate these students to become educators, oral health professionals and researchers in the field of dental hygiene is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1. Schools in the states offering master’s degree programs for dental hygiene students.

Schools offering master’s degree programs in dental hygiene	
University of California San Francisco	Rutgers University
University of Southern California	University of New Mexico
University of Bridgeport	Ohio State University
Idaho State University	East Tennessee State University
MCPHS University	University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis
University of Maryland, Baltimore	Texas A&M University
University of Michigan	University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
Metropolitan State University	Old Dominion University
University of Minnesota	Eastern Washington University
University of Missouri ri-Kansas City	University of Washington
The University of North Carolina	West Virginia University

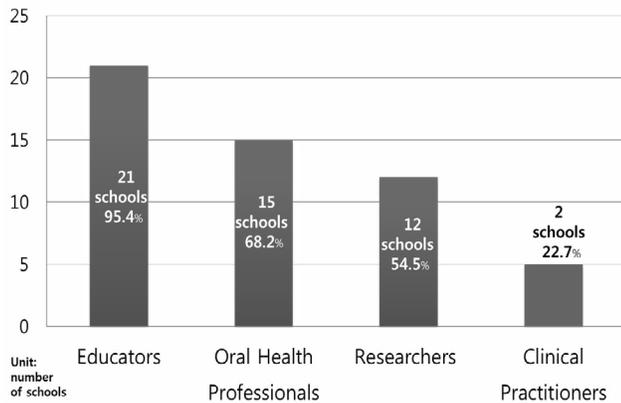


Figure 2. Main objectives of postgraduate dental hygiene programs.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Despite the fact that there are significant differences between the fields of dental hygiene in Korea and the states in terms of their work environment and scope of work, certain differences in terms of post-graduate dental hygiene programs in the states still seem noteworthy. Moreover, since the fact that commencing doctoral degree programs in dental hygiene in the states is widely discussed at the moment implies certain significance to the field of dental hygiene in Korea, studies on these new efforts could be substantially beneficial.

5. References

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