

# Special Care Dentistry Electives- Tools for Competency and Capacity in the Dental Workforce

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## Issues

In July 2020, the Commission on Dental Accreditation implemented standards for the education of predoctoral students stating, "Graduates **must** be competent in assessing and managing the treatment of patients with special needs." This standard has been challenging for dental education nationally, and the limited exposure students receive has not reinforced new graduates to treat these populations upon graduation.

## Position

In the absence of PGY-1 programming, this CODA standard can be exceedingly challenging to obtain. Small group, two-week immersive electives, can help dental students learn to treat such adult patients. In so doing, student competency is reinforced, and experiential learning underscored through interprofessional education.

The intended goal of this academic program is to create an immersive student elective that is aimed at enhancing confidence and preparedness in providing care for adults with special healthcare needs. This will help impact the larger public health issue nationwide by allowing more patients to achieve parity in dental healthcare access across their lifespan. Project funded by the IUPUI Center for Teaching & Learning.

## Post-Elective Focus Group Formative Student Feedback (N=3):

"Incorporating this more, so that future dentists like us, who had this exposure, can bridge that gap and see those patients in their own offices."

→ INCREASING CAPACITY FOR CARE POST-GRADUATION!

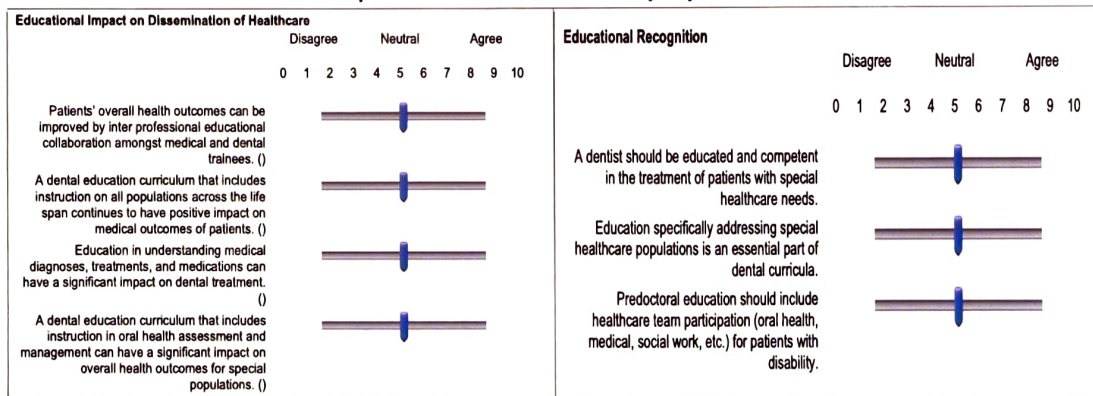
"This elective was really good, and it was two weeks. So, we just got to expand on our normal experience a little bit more."

→ UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES OUTSIDE OF THE WALLS OF THE DENTAL SCHOOL!

"I enjoyed it personally just because I'm doing a GPR next year, I think it was really helpful that I got that introduction before I start that program. I think rotating in the hospital is really unique. I liked the rotations that were selected. I feel like they were relevant."

→ STARTING WITH SMALL GROUPS AS FOUNDATIONAL WORK FOR FUTURE PGY-1 PROGRAMMING!

## Sample Pre & Post Elective Surveys by Domain:



Pre and Post Elective Survey Instrument created to allow students to rate domain statements on a scale from 0 to 10.

Pre-elective mean rating was 9, while post-elective mean rating was 10 (N=3).

## Conclusion

The ability to provide access to dental care for vulnerable populations, those with intellectual and developmental disability, as well as individuals with underlying or acquired medical complexity, must be further embedded in the academic and patient care goals of dental programs. For those students hoping to impact these populations in their communities after graduation, an enhanced experience is possible, as a two-week immersive elective, to help guide dental students in how to routinely treat adult patients with special health care needs. This initiative helps to impact more students and allow curricula to stay ahead of a curve driven by educational standards and patient needs. For those institutions looking to expand to future PGY-1 programming, this small-scale initiative can help lay foundational work to build upon for residency programming in subsequent years.