

HEALTH RESEARCH ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

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College *	College of Dentistry
Department *	Dental Student
Title of Research *	Dental Student's Feelings, Percived Competence and Comfort in Treating UnderservedPopulations
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Introduction & Purpose *	The purpose of this study was to assess dental students' feelings, perceived competence and comfort treating underserved populations, including non-English speaking populations and persons of other ethnic backgrounds, based on the students' year of education.
Experimental Design *	Surveys were developed to assess first year (D1) and second-fourth year (D2-D4) students' attitudes towards treating 13 underserved populations (15 and 21 items, respectively). The surveys queried students about their feelings toward treating underserved populations 5 years post graduation and their current perceived competence and confidence to treat underserved populations. After obtaining IRB approval, the surveys were distributed to all students during the 2008-09 academic year (N=311). Descriptive means and frequencies were calculated.
Results *	<p>281 surveys were completed for a response rate of 90.3%. Students' feelings towards treating underserved populations post graduation changed from more positive to mixed responses as students advanced through school. Students were most positive toward treating other ethnic groups and children under 3 years old and most negative toward treating homebound and jail inmates. In general, students' perceived competence in treating all populations increased with each year of school. However, most students felt they required more training with medically complex, frail elderly, homebound, and non-English speaking patients. Overall, students are the most comfortable treating other ethnic groups and low-income populations and least comfortable treating medically complex and mentally compromised patients.</p>
Conclusions *	Although students feel comfortable treating most underserved populations and their perceived competence increases as they progress through school, their attitudes toward treating these populations decreases. Experiences should be developed for dental students to help minimize their change in attitude.

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