

Why integrated teaching is important for dental professionals

January 18 2019, by Amy King

A new paper published in the *British Dental Journal* highlights how dental hygiene therapists can be successfully trained alongside dentists, thanks to a pioneering model of teaching at the University of Plymouth.

Developed by a team of academics from Peninsula Dental School, Plymouth's Dental Hygiene Therapy (BDHT) programme, which commenced in 2014, is the first of its kind to be integrated with the Dental Surgery (BDS) programme. BDHT and BDS students are taught together (inter-professional education) throughout the course structure.

Led by Clare McIlwaine, Lecturer in Oral Health Sciences in Peninsula Dental School, the paper highlights the BDHT curriculum and the novelty of the programme.

The full paper is titled "A novel, integrated curriculum for dental hygiene therapists and dentists."

Since its inception, the integrated programme has received an award of General Dental Council sufficiency, 100 percent BDHT graduate employment and 100 percent final-year pass rate.

The paper also highlights the need for better understanding of dental hygiene-therapist roles and their importance in shared care.

McIlwaine said:

"To meet the challenges of an ageing population with increasingly complex treatment needs, clinicians are expected to provide patient-centred care in a collaborative, interdisciplinary team environment, and that has seen dental hygiene-therapists take on a broader range of treatments.

"However, there may be still misconceptions within both professions about what the other does. In order to tackle these issues in practice, they must be tackled at the earliest stage of their careers – undergraduate – and that's one of the reasons we developed the programmes as we have.

"This paper offers preliminary evidence that an integrated BDS-BDHT programme can be successful. This course is in its infancy; we now aspire to move forward with further studies to provide qualitative and [quantitative data](#) to assess and validate the success of our integrated education model, as well as career pathways beyond the first year after graduation. It describes our vision and its relevance for the future of inter-professional dental education."

The University's primary care teaching model is also pioneering in the UK – and designed for students to obtain hands-on experience with the patient groups they are most likely to encounter once qualified.

More information: E. Dobson et al. Perceptions of e-professionalism among dental students: a UK dental school study, *BDJ* (2019). [DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2019.11](https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2019.11)

Provided by University of Plymouth

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