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## Opinion among undergraduates about oral and maxillofacial pathology as an MDS career option: A questionnaire survey

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### Abstract

**Background:** The level of importance given to Oral Pathology and Microbiology as a career option has been decreased. Multiple academic factors are responsible for the same

**Objective:** To assess the attitude of undergraduate Dental Students on selecting Oral Pathology and Microbiology as a career option.

**Materials and methods:** A digital survey was carried out among undergraduates from final year till internship where their interest in pursuing MDS in Oral pathology and microbiology was surveyed. There were 200 study participants based on convenience sampling technique.

**Result:** Maximum study participants were interested in pursuing MDS in clinical branches whereas only 2.5% were interested to pursue career as MDS in Oral pathology and microbiology.

**Conclusion:** Overall attitude of Final year under graduates and Intern dental students towards Oral and maxillofacial pathology as a MDS option was low. This subject was not of much interest during their Undergraduation days and majority are interested to opt clinical branch as a MDS career option.

**Keywords:** Oral pathology, undergraduates, MDS option

### Introduction

An internship in Dentistry is considered as a phase where one can improve their own quality of treatment work. Most students decide their plans during their first exposure to a particular subject.

They have nine options and among these nine branches of dentistry, Oral Pathology and microbiology is one of the specialities which can be defined as “the study of causes, processes and effects of disease together with the resultant alterations of oral structure and functions”<sup>[1]</sup>.

Looking deeply into this matter, it has been observed that recently passed-out dental students and even the ones who are studying dentistry or pursuing a higher degree in dentistry are highly concerned about financial security, postgraduation studies, interest focus, work satisfaction, status in society and fulfilment of their desire to serve their nation and fellow beings once they attain their degree. All these are chief reasons that are provoking a student in this field to think about more future career pathways<sup>[2]</sup>.

Furthermore, a master's degree in Oral Pathology and microbiology is becoming less of interest, especially for male dentists not only because of scarce academic career opportunities as compared to other dental specialities but also lower income generation<sup>[2]</sup>.

Lesser chances of getting academic roles have been attributed largely to massive increase in number of passed out Oral Pathologists in the last two decades in proportion to increase in job openings for this role in dental colleges. Even if one deliberates for further research options post Master's degree, there are not many organizations in India which can sponsor such projects. Moreover, without any other job in hand, self-funding option becomes almost impossible. Due to this prevailing situation and miserable plight, many Oral Pathologists are left with the choice to cast aside their specialty and enter a full-time dental practice which itself is financially challenging<sup>[3]</sup>.

After completion of Postgraduation in Oral Pathology the clinical practice satisfaction levels were found to be only “medium” and this can be one of the reasons for undergraduates to not opting MDS as a career in Oral Pathology [4].

Also, other factors which can be stated where Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology is not much of interest is due to lack of proper equipment among.

### Materials and Methodology

A digital survey was carried out among undergraduates from Final year students to Interns from different colleges of Gujarat and Rajasthan based on convenience sampling technique. 200 study participants were included in the study. A self-planned question “Which one branch will you opt for MDS as a career option” was circulated via digital platform and response of those participants who responded in a given time limit was recorded by the same medium.

### Results

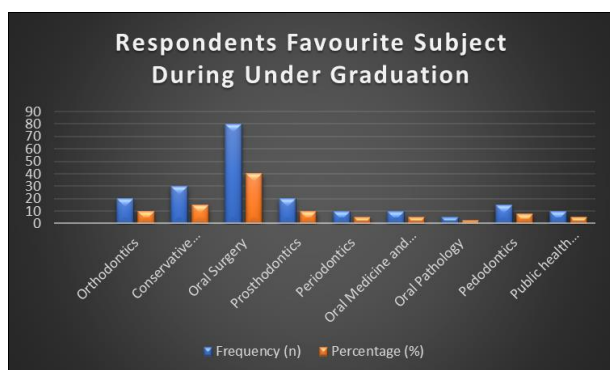
**Table 1:** Distribution of study population according to gender

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	50	25
female	150	75
TOTAL	200	100

**Table 2:** Distribution of study population according to various branches related to under graduate and post graduate courses

Respondents desire to pursue post-graduation in different branches after BDS	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Oral Surgery	80	40
Conservative Dentistry	30	15
Orthodontics	20	10
Prosthodontics	20	10
Pedodontics	15	7.5
Periodontics	10	5
Oral Medicine and Radiology	10	5
Public health dentistry	10	5
Oral Pathology	5	2.5
Total	200	100

### Distribution of study population according to gender



### Discussion

Final year and Internship is the phase where students are exposed to all dental subjects where they have basic gist regarding all dental subjects. Though, Internship is the transition period of a student to a doctor. Every intern student gets an opportunity of 1 year to apply their theoretical

knowledge practically and make themselves responsible enough for the community. This one-year period benefits the student to make a self-perception regarding each department/subject and eventually aid them in planning their future. Henceforth, the rationale of conducting the present study on the interns as well as final years was due to the fact that, they have an insightful of each subject more precisely as compared to other first, second and third year students.

The present study was conducted to assess the perception regarding Oral Pathology and microbiology as a MDS option among all the final years as well as interns from multiple colleges of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Among 200 study participants majority of the respondents were females which is in accordance of the study results of Sharma *et al.* (2016) [5], Naidu *et al.* (2014) [6] and Aditya S (2013) [7]

When enquired regarding their specialty of interest in post-graduation, majority of the total population were inclined towards choosing other clinical disciplines in which oral surgery, endodontics and orthodontics were at top of the priority.

Maximum of the study participants were more interested in oral surgery followed by conservative dentistry which was in parallel to the study results of Gadve VR *et al.* (2016) [9] and Purver J *et al.* (2016) [10], Faisal MR *et al.* (2017) [8]. Possible reason for this negative attitude towards the Oral pathology subject may be misconception and misjudgment regarding the subject as a complete non-clinical specialty, unawareness regarding the importance of the subjects, greater challenges in the concerned discipline, job opportunity in the rural area rather than in urban area.

In the present Study only 2.5% of study participants were interested to opt Oral Pathology and Microbiology as a career option and probable reasons which can be stated are fair equipment facilities and exposure during under graduation along with that mind set of not having any clinical work in Oral Pathology as they are exposed to draw diagrams and to observe and identify only microscopic slides which can be monotonous as an undergraduate and makes them not to think for MDS in concerned branch.

### An appeal by the participants

To enhance interest in Oral Pathology among final year dental students, dental schools should adopt a multi-pronged approach. This includes emphasizing its interdisciplinary relevance, using modern teaching methods, training passionate faculty, promoting practical research, facilitating clinical exposure, offering career counseling, collecting student feedback, highlighting clinical significance, fostering networking, and providing incentives for excellence. These measures can inspire students to consider Oral Pathology as a rewarding career path and contribute to its growth.

### Conflict of Interest

Not available

### Financial Support

Not available

### Limitation

The drawback is that the study has been conducted only in selected students from dental colleges of Gujarat and Rajasthan, so results cannot be generalized to all dental colleges of India.

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