Formal Report Proposal

To: Erika Paterson, Professor  
From: Gabriella Meroli Assad, Student  
Date: June 14, 2021. Revised: June 28, 2021  
Subject: Proposal for Increasing Oral Health Education of UBC Medical Students

**Introduction**Oral health is essential to overall health. Many oral health related problems are preventable through educating patients and providing professional care. Unfortunately, many individuals do not seek regular dental care. It is quite common for care to be sought when there is a problem which results in care provided by medical doctors. Medical doctors must be knowledgeable on a multitude of health issues. The main problem with patients seeking oral health care in a medical setting is that doctors are not equipped with dental equipment. Patients end up in emergency rooms due to untreated dental problems and this is problematic as emergency settings are to be reserved for life threatening injuries. Many dental issues, when treated or prevented appropriately, can avoid a visit to the emergency room. Therefore, avoiding emergency visits can increase favorable dental prognoses. With health care treatment options constantly evolving and more holistic approaches being elected, having medical professionals calibrated on common dental practices and preventions is advantageous for all. Dr. Torsten Nielsen is the MD/PhD UBC Program Director who aims to maintain excellence of the program and grow it further. He would ideally be the reader of the Formal Report however if he is unable to do so, I plan to inquire with The Dean, UBC Faculty of Medicine Vice-President, Health, Dr. Dermot Kelleher. Some of Dr. Kelleher’s commitments are academic leadership and research excellence.

**Statement of the Problem**Due to the comprehensive learning involved in the UBC medical program, limited time is given to teaching oral health and prevention. Because medical doctors are often the first point of contact for individuals seeking care, this can result in dentists being left out of the equation. Many Canadians live without dental coverage thus are left with minimal treatment options by their medical doctor. Access to dental care is a national issue faced by our country today. Due to this ongoing shortcoming, preventable solutions are sometimes no longer an option. It is critical for doctors to be aware of oral health and dental related issues. Moreover, if medical doctors were provided with more dental education whilst undergoing medical studies, then severe dental issues will be avoided, thus reducing emergency hospital visits and thus increasing general well being and quality of life.

**Proposed Solution**One possible solution to the problem is to have dental students share their knowledge and expertise with medical students. Dental students can be assigned a teaching project on oral health, oral health-related issues, and basic intra and extra oral examination measures. This can be presented to medical students over a two-day seminar program. The program will be opportunistic and involve clinical (hands-on) practice. With the strong link between oral health and overall health, it is crucial for medical students to receive adequate dental related education. Medical doctors therefore will be better equipped to appropriately triage their patients and encourage the importance of regular dental visits to prevent detrimental health problems.

**Scope**A survey has been developed to measure the feasibility of incorporating changes to the quantity and quality of oral health education for medical students. This information will be collected whilst maintaining participants confidentiality and autonomy. Substantial primary data will be gathered through the survey. The survey time will take less than 5 minutes to complete and should hopefully reach a minimum of 10 individuals depending on interest and availability. Information bias will be respected and avoided by including both students and faculty. Secondary research will be collected through Canadian databases in search of the oral-systemic link, the rise of dental visits to the emergency room and it’s associated governmental cost in BC.

**Research Methods**To effectively gather recent data, a survey will be distributed, and the questions will be formulated as a primary source of gathering information. This will involve collaborating with UBC medical students and faculty. A consultation with a faculty member would be valuable to gain more knowledge on the current oral health education provided to UBC medical students and to get a perception of potential pain points associated with this. Secondary research will also be used and thus combined with primary research to considerably increase the study’s credibility. A synthesis of the study will be systematically developed into a formal report.

I plan to include the following questions in the survey addressed to the Faculty of Medicine:  
  
**1. How much education time is allotted for oral health education in the UBC medical school curriculum?**  
a) less than 3 hours   
b) less than 6 hours   
c) a full school day   
b) multiple days   
  
 **Specifically, is any of the following covered?   
To the best of your knowledge, please indicate with Y or N.**

2. Education on comprehensively identifying the anatomy of the oral cavity. Y/N   
  
3. Fostering the skills to complete an intra and extra oral examination. Y/N   
  
4. Developing the ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal oral findings. Y/N  
  
5. Determining what is required to gather relevant dental history. Y/N  
  
6. Recognizing the roles of dental professionals and communicating inter-professionally. Y/N

**To the best of your ability, please answer the following based on experience and observation.**  
7. Do the medical students and faculty feel the time spent on oral health/dentistry satisfactory?  
  
8. Do the medical students and faculty believe the material on oral health/dentistry broad?

**My Qualifications**I have been involved in a compressed teaching curriculum on oral health for medical students at the University of Ottawa. During the experience, it dawned on me that the students were only given one short day to understand the importance of oral health and preventative screening. Further, the volunteer experience from various dental programs and organizations alongside the ten years of professional practice accrued will bolster this research process. As a dental hygienist, I believe that the education on this subject should be slightly expanded on, though awareness of the intensive medical program is considered and will be respected throughout the research process and the formal report.  
  
**Conclusion**Evidence-informed research has made it indisputable that there is a powerful relation between oral health and overall health. With this knowledge, highlighting the importance of preventative dentistry and holistic approaches to reduce unfavorable circumstances among individuals is fundamental. Seemingly,additional oral health education would be valuable to UBC medical students. With your approval I will begin the research process.