“A well-recognised health profession”

Prof. Lakshman Samaranayake talks about the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Dentistry

Established in 1980, the University of Hong Kong’s Faculty of Dentistry is not only one of the youngest but also fastest growing dental schools in Asia. Recently, the school opened a new Centre for Advanced Dental Care that aims to provide higher clinical training to students and visiting dentists. At the Open Day in November, Dental Tribune Asia Pacific spoke with the Dean, Prof. Lakshman Samaranayake, about the Faculty and what makes studying Dentistry at the University of Hong Kong unique.

Dental Tribune Asia Pacific: Since 1997, Hong Kong has been administered by the People’s Republic of China. Did this have an influence on the Faculty and Hong Kong dentistry in general?

Prof. Lakshman Samaranayake: The handover had a major impact on our relations with the key academic institutes in Mainland China. In collaboration with the Beijing University School of Stomatology, for example, the Faculty initiated the Mainland’s first ever joint international clinical programme in Periodontology in 2007. We have also initiated joint Annual Fellowships in Advanced Dentistry together with the Chinese Stomatological Association and established the Wab-Ching China Dental Sciences Development Project.

Where do the majority of your students come from and do you cooperate with other universities abroad?

The vast majority of our undergraduate students are local, and only a minority come from Mainland China or the region. However, we are proud to say that we have over 200 postgraduate students from over 50 nations registered in the Faculty right now and at least the same number of agreements with major universities overseas to promote academic research and cultural exchange. In the last two years, the Faculty has been also regular host to dental school representatives from around the world, and signed academic and research collaboration agreements with dental schools in Thailand, Finland and the US, amongst others.

How many Dentistry students graduate from the Faculty each year and what are their overall job prospects?

Each year, around 50 dentists graduate from our school. They are able to pursue a career in private general or specialist practice, hospital dentistry, government dental services, or teaching or research.

Dentistry is a well-recognised health profession in Hong Kong and dental graduates have the benefits of a high professional status, as well as an above-average income. Dental graduates from the Faculty normally secure gainful employment in the field of dentistry shortly after graduation. In 2009, all Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) graduates found jobs or pursued further studies within the first six months of graduation. Let me add that more than 50 per cent of dentists in Hong Kong are alumni of our Faculty.

You rival with other dental schools in Asia. In your opinion, what makes dental training in Hong Kong unique?

Our training is unique for a number of reasons but I think, one of the main things that makes us different is that we use English as main instructional language. Our teaching staff also comes from more than ten different countries and they enrich the courses with international knowledge. The Faculty is also one of the best equipped in Asia, with students having the latest digital technology at their disposal.

Last, we are the only dental education facility in Asia that offers Problem-Based Learning (PBL) programmes for undergraduates.

How many undergraduate students graduated from the Faculty in 2010 and are the number increasing or decreasing?

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