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Interview: Dr. Rani, Dean of College of Dentistry, University of Sharjah in UAE

"We also have a dental technology program—a diploma of dental technology where we train future dental technicians, who are very heavily involved in using CAD/CAM technology in their studies."

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know how to operate computers? But then, if we look at our students today, research has shown that all children who are born after 1980 are very computer literate, and there are many publications about that. So we have taken this into consideration, and we have found that when children are educated in an environment where it is not digital, they don’t find the lesson interesting. So when students learn in a classroom using notepads and chalk and blackboard, method of teaching they find the lesson very boring, because their life is digital, AND they can cope with it.

Therefore we consider all these factors, and because we know that the computer industry will take the dental industry to a different level, and it has happened now and will in the near future, we have added the CAD/CAM technologies in operative dentistry, we have also introduced our students to methods of assessing and planning dental implants using software, to analyze where is the best site to place dental implants in the patients jaw, and all this planning is done using software. So coming back to CAD/CAM, we have started delivering lectures to students in CAD/CAM technology, we are the biggest investor in CAD/CAM technology education in this region, where for your information, we have four CAD/CAM systems.

"Here at the University of Sharjah, Dental College, we deliver the knowledge and we take the students through a special experience"

"As in any medical related field, the industry of dentistry is always changing. Especially considering a trend that the world is seeing now, with the rise of middle class and higher class, and it may not be advantageous if we deliver such philosophies to our students here, because our students come from 40 countries around the world. As we have an Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and the whole UAE have a very large expatriate population, and our students are children of these expatriates, and we need to prepare them so that they are able to deliver their knowledge and skills to their own community. And they come from countries that have that high GDP, high income countries, and from countries that are still developing. So our curriculum meets the needs of these students, so I must say that we train highly qualified and highly competent general practitioners to deliver their services for the various levels of socio-economic status.

As we know, Dubai, Sharjah and the United Arab Emirates are in the Middle East, and I must say that the dental market here is huge, and of very high quality. I met dentists coming from many parts of the world, and I learned about different systems of dentistry and dental training background when I talked to them. So this is a place where dentists form different cultures and different training backgrounds come to meet. And I must say that the standards are very high, so much so again because this country has a very organized health system, regulated by the Ministry of Health, and they have an excellent licensing system, and regulations are in place to regulate these dental practitioners who come from so many countries.

So I must say that the dental market is big and of very high quality. Therefore when I met colleagues who are practicing in Dubai and Abu Dhabi and even in Sharjah who have patients who are coming in from outside the country, I must say that these patients are actually health tourists coming to get dental treatment in this country. It’s not a surprise because this country has the platform to offer these services, so I must say that we are in a very, very exclusive dental environment amongst excellent dental colleagues.

So how would you say this rising interest in dental education here in the region is affecting the scene? Would you say that a lot of the students are interested in giving back to this community? Or are more willing to impart their learned knowledge around the world? How would you say the education scene has influenced the professional scene?

That’s a very important point to see how the dental education system or, in fact, how does the curriculum move the students to choose their interests. I also say the content of the program in the University of Sharjah we develop the content of the program, we deliver the knowledge and we take the students through a special experience, such that at the point of graduation they are prepared to become general practitioners who can provide a basic dental care in general practice with a special emphasis in community service. So we develop in our students, the passion to care for the community.

As we all know in many big cities around the world, dentistry is a highly profitable business, if you want to look at it from a business point of view, and as it’s a very profitable business, the cost of treatment is very high, it may not be for all levels of the community there. It would be for the middle class. It would be advantageous if we deliver such philosophies to our students here, because our students come from 40 countries around the world. As we have an Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and the whole UAE have a very large expatriate population, and our students are children of these expatriates, and we need to prepare them so that they are able to deliver their knowledge and skills to their own community. And they come from countries that have that high GDP, high income countries, and from countries that are still developing. So our curriculum meets the needs of these students, so I must say that we train highly qualified and highly competent general practitioners to deliver their services for the various levels of socio-economic status."