

Challenges Facing the Dental Profession in Iraq

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Dear Editor,

Iraq now has more than 40 dental colleges, with an alarming 14 new private institutions opening recently. While this expansion may seem to increase access to education, it has raised serious concerns about the quality of training and the sustainability of the profession.¹ Many of the newly established private colleges lack the necessary resources, qualified faculty, and modern facilities to offer comprehensive dental education.² As a result, the quality of education in these institutions is often subpar, leaving graduates with insufficient practical skills and clinical expertise.

In addition, the overwhelming number of new graduates has led to a saturation of the job market, threatening the profession's viability. With more dentists than available positions, many graduates face unemployment or underemployment, which in turn pressures the standards of care.³ Dentists, in order to remain competitive, may feel compelled to lower fees or offer suboptimal treatment, negatively impacting patient outcomes and the profession's reputation.

This situation is compounded by the limited infrastructure and underfunding of the Iraqi healthcare system,

which is struggling to support such a large influx of new dental practitioners.⁴ As a result, many dentists are working in less-than-ideal conditions, further diminishing the quality of care.

To address these issues, a more balanced approach is needed. This includes stricter accreditation standards for dental colleges, improved faculty development, and better regulation of private institutions. Furthermore, greater alignment between educational output and the actual demand for dental services is crucial to ensure the profession remains sustainable and capable of providing high-quality care.⁵

The dental profession in Iraq is at a critical crossroads. Immediate action is necessary to safeguard the quality of education and care, ensuring that Iraq's dental workforce remains skilled, capable, and able to meet the growing needs of the population.

Conflict of Interest

None. ■

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