Demographic Trends Among Faculty in US Dental Schools

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to evaluate national and regional trends in age, gender, and race/ethnicity of dental school faculty.

Methods: This study analyzed data describing US dental school faculty for 10 academic years (2005-06 to 2014-15). The temporal distribution of dental faculty was analyzed using descriptive statistics and linear regression to estimate the annual change nationally and regionally. Data was obtained from the national survey of dental schools conducted annually by the American Dental Education Association.

Results: Nationwide, over the 10-year period, there was a significant (P<.001) increase in median age (0.4 years of age each year) and the proportion of women (0.6% each year) on faculties. Regional variation in age and gender was small, with somewhat older faculty at dental schools in the South and proportionally more women in the Midwest. Trend data showed a decrease in White faculty (1.2% each year, P<.05) and an increase of Asian faculty (1.0% each year, P<.01) over the period. Race/ethnicity of faculty varied by region; dental schools in the South had a higher representation of Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American faculty than elsewhere.

Conclusions: The dental school faculty workforce is aging and is more gender and racially/ethnically diverse due to an increase in women and Asians on faculties. However, racial minorities remain underrepresented. Implementation of regional strategies to recruit younger, more diverse faculty would benefit dental schools, ensure sustainability of programs, and improve the cultural competence of the workforce to meet the oral health care needs of a diversifying US population.

RESULTS (cont.)

In 2014-15, the gender mix among dental faculty was similar across regions. Dental schools in the Midwest reported slightly more female faculty (33.7%) than nationally. As with much of the health workforce, dental school faculty are aging. Over the 10-year period examined for this study, the median age of dental faculty progressed from 53 to 56 and the age at the 75th percentile moved from 61 to 65 years over the decade.

DISCUSSION

- An emphasis on recruiting younger faculty would benefit dental schools to ensure continuity and sustainability of education programs.
- The increasing trend of women on dental school faculty is consistent with the feminization of dentistry that is occurring currently.
- The proportion of underrepresented racial minorities on dental faculties remains low.
- The study findings suggest a regional rather than national employment market for dental school faculty.

REFERENCES