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FROM EDUCATION TO PRACTICE: INTEGRATIVE PATHWAYS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DENTAL CARE

Abstract. The development of dental care in Ukraine requires the integration of educational programs and the practical training of dentists [1]. The study revealed an insufficient level of practical preparedness among graduates, along with the need to implement simulation-based training, dual education, and clinical mentorship [2]. The proposed integration model is based on the combination of basic education, clinical practice, and continuous professional development [3].

Keywords: dental education, clinical practice, integration, professional development.

Abstract. Introduction Dental care is an essential component of the healthcare system, directly influencing the overall health of the population and its quality of life [4]. In the context of globalization, the rapid development of medical technologies, and the increasing mobility of the workforce, there is a growing need to train highly qualified and competitive dentists capable of working in accordance with international standards [5].

Traditionally, the system of dental education in Ukraine has been historically based on the predominant acquisition of theoretical knowledge, while the practical component has remained insufficiently developed. This leads to a mismatch between employers' expectations and the actual readiness of graduates to perform clinical procedures and make independent clinical decisions [6-7].

Analysis of current trends indicates an increasing need for the implementation of new educational technologies (simulation training, interdisciplinary clinical modules, dual education), as well as for closer integration between educational institutions and healthcare facilities. Strengthening this connection is a necessary condition for improving the quality of dental care and developing the professional competence of young specialists [8].

Aim of the Study The aim of the study is to identify effective integration pathways for the development of dental care in Ukraine by combining the theoretical and practical training of future dentists, as well as to analyze existing challenges and prospects for integrating the educational process with clinical practice in dentistry [9].

Materials and Methods The study was conducted in 2024–2025 and had a comprehensive character.

Bibliometric analysis: a systematic review of 42 scientific publications addressing the current state of dental education in Ukraine and European Union countries was performed [10].

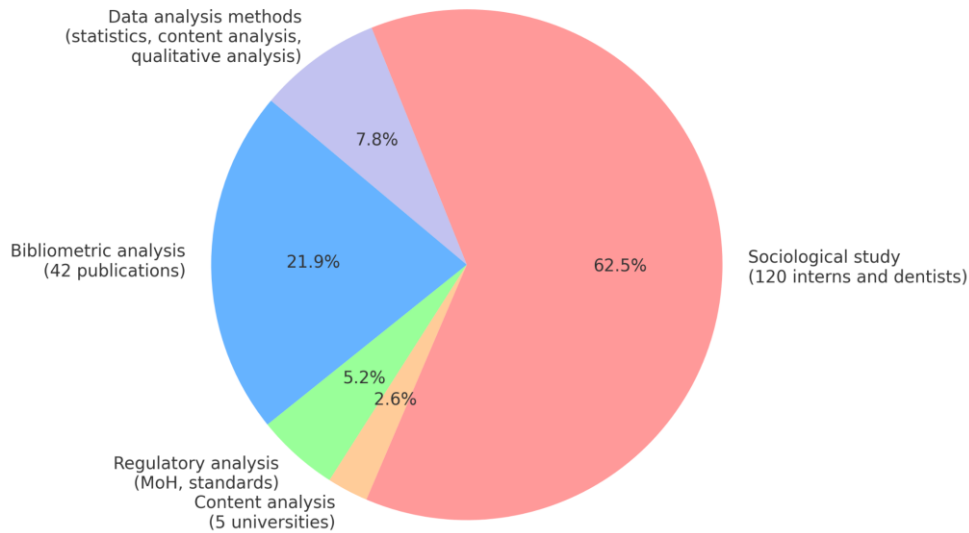
Regulatory analysis: current legal acts of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine regulating educational and clinical activities, as well as educational standards for the training of dentists, were analyzed [11].

Content analysis of educational programs: curricula of five leading medical universities in Ukraine (Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Odesa) were examined to determine the ratio of theoretical and practical components of training [12-13].

Sociological study: a survey of 120 interns and young dentists from various regions of Ukraine was conducted. The questionnaire included questions on self-assessment of practical skills, the effectiveness of educational programs, and the need for additional forms of training (mentorship, simulation centers, dual education) [14].

Data analysis methods: descriptive statistics, comparative and content analysis, as well as qualitative analysis of open-ended responses, were applied.

Structure of the Study (2024-2025)



Results The analysis of curricula demonstrated considerable variability in the number of hours allocated to practical training, which on average accounted for only 25–30% of the total academic workload [15]. In most institutions, structured mentorship programs were absent, and the use of simulation technologies was limited mainly to the demonstration of basic procedures without active student involvement [16].

Survey results indicated that 68% of respondents assessed their level of practical readiness as insufficient or critically insufficient, while only 12% considered themselves prepared for independent clinical practice after completing their internship. A total of 74% expressed support for the implementation of a dual training model that combines the educational process with paid work in dental clinics under the supervision of mentors. Furthermore, 81% of respondents emphasized the need to

increase the time allocated for simulation-based training and the practice of clinical skills in controlled environments [17-18].

Based on the obtained data, a model of integration between education and practice was developed, comprising three consecutive stages:

1. Basic training — combining theoretical disciplines with simulation-based training and modular practical classes.

2. Clinical internship — student work in clinical settings under the guidance of mentors, with a gradual increase in clinical autonomy.

3. Continuous professional development — postgraduate education, participation in professional development programs, conferences, courses, and internships.

The proposed model allows for the gradual formation of practical competencies without a gap between learning and real clinical practice [19].

Conclusions The obtained results confirm that the current system of dental training in Ukraine requires substantial modernization through the strengthening of the practical component and the implementation of integration mechanisms.

The integration of the educational process with clinical practice will contribute to improving the quality of dental care, enhancing the clinical competencies of graduates, and strengthening their competitiveness in both the national and international labor markets. The proposed model can serve as a foundation for the development of new educational standards, dual education programs, and the establishment of a network of simulation centers.

Thus, the integration of education and practice represents a strategic direction for the development of dental care, requiring support from state authorities, professional associations, and healthcare institutions [20].

Keywords: dental education, clinical practice, integration, simulation training, dual education.

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