

Equity in access to dental-training: gender, ethnic and social issues

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Objective: To explore variations in the gender, ethnic and social background of Hong Kong dental students compared to other university students. Method: Retrospective analysis of a survey on the backgrounds of full-time students admitted to the University of Hong Kong over a five-year period (1998/9-2002/3). Results: The response rate of the survey was 75.6%. Variations in gender, ethnic and social background were found amongst dental students compared to other students ($P < 0.05$). However, with the exception of gender there was no significant difference between dental and medical students' social backgrounds. Over the five year period the socio-demographic profile of the dental students did not vary significantly with the exception of income of parents background ($P < 0.05$). Logistic regression showed that compared to other students, dental students were more likely to be male (OR=1.50, 95%CI 1.16, 1.95), be born outside Hong Kong (OR=1.45, 95%CI 1.01, 2.08) and having parents with secondary schooling or below (OR=1.54, 95%CI 1.15, 2.07). Conclusion: The gender, ethnic and social background of dental students varies somewhat compared to other university students. However, there is little difference in their socio-demographic profiles compared to medical students. In the most part, the socio-demographic profiles of dental students remained similar over the five year study period.

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