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Letter to the editor

Integrating art in Oral Histology and Oral Pathology lessons: Indian scenario

We laud the recent work by Yu CH and Chiang CP, which explores the integration of arts and humanities into dental education as a pedagogical approach to enhance students' engagement with microscope related subjects, specifically Oral Histology and Oral Pathology.¹ We thoroughly agree with the authors in opining that incorporating arts is necessary for better understanding and learning of these subjects.

In the context of dental teaching institutes in India, the prevailing methodology predominantly relies on conventional light microscopy for instructing students in Oral Histology and Oral Pathology.² The core emphasis of these lessons' centres on the identification of oral cells, tissue structures, and pathological conditions based on histological characteristics. Subsequently, students are tasked with creating meticulous and pertinent schematic diagrams in their journals, employing haematoxylin and eosin (H & E, routine staining) coloured pencils. These diagrams are consequently evaluated by subject matter experts to ensure accuracy and appropriateness. This practice fosters a personal connection between the educators and the students, which might otherwise be challenging to establish. It also provides students with a platform to exercise their creative and artistic talents, thereby constituting another avenue for infusing artistic elements into dental education. While the prevailing methodology is considered routine and conventional, it has few inherent limitations. Notably, these practical lessons have remained static over the years, which results in repetition of stereotypical diagrams that are primarily recollections from memory rather than products of imagination and true comprehension.

Similar techniques are adopted in the context of Oral Anatomy modules, where students are tasked with the intricate carving teeth into wax blocks. However, the students are initially encouraged to tap into their innate creativity and artistic abilities to sculpt various forms on the wax block. This initial step serves a dual purpose; it not only enhances students' manual dexterity through the utilization of wax carvers but also serves as an introduction to

the world of dental instrumentation. Concurrently, this creative approach imparts comprehensive knowledge about the intricate aspects of dental anatomy pertaining to teeth. This innovative pedagogical strategy fosters a unique amalgamation of science and art, allowing students to explore their artistic potential while acquiring a profound understanding of dental anatomy—a fundamental component of dental education.

In conclusion, integration of artistic expression into dental education is a powerful and multifaceted approach. Such holistic approaches have the potential to reshape the landscape of dental education.

References

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