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SELF-PERCEIVED STRESSORS OF BACHELOR OF ORAL HEALTH STUDENTS AND LEVEL OF SUPPORT IN THE ORAL HEALTH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



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Despite a recent trend to investigate students' stressors in dentistry learning environments, there is little research on students' stressors in the oral health learning environments. This study aimed to identify self-perceived stressors of Bachelor of Oral Health students to determine if the learning support provided at the University of Otago, Faculty of Dentistry, New Zealand is meeting student's needs. All Bachelor of Oral Health students (n=135) were invited to complete an online modified version of the Dental Environmental Stress Survey. The survey consisted of 39 questions: 7 collecting demographic information, 1 free comment box, and 31 items related to various potential sources of stress which students were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'not at all stressful' to 'extremely stressful'. Additionally, the student learning support system was examined. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software. Around half of the group of respondents were first-year students, with participants from second and third years equally distributed. The items 'fear of being unable to catch up if behind' and 'examinations and assessments' scored the highest, indicating that the students perceived these to be their greatest stressors. Overall, academic requirements were the highest scoring self-perceived stressors for students from all year groups. Stressors related to the clinical environment were highest for second-year students, which is when students start seeing patients. Although there is an existing network of support for students, the study identified several self-perceived stressors over 3 years of Bachelor of Oral Health study that have implications for student support. We describe how existing student support correlates to the findings, and areas where support might be increased. We conclude with directions for future research to better understand students' support needs in the oral health learning environment.

Biography

Hanna Olson has a Master's Degree in Integrative Health Science from the University of Kristianstad, Sweden. In 2015, she joined the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Otago; New Zealand's National Centre for Dentistry, as a Lecturer in the Department of Oral Sciences. Hanna is now Head of Discipline for Dental Hygiene. She has 15 years of clinical work experience as a Dental Hygienist in Scandinavia, providing care for patients of all ages in different settings including private practice, the Community Dental Service, Specialist Dentistry within the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery clinic and Hospital Dentistry. She has first-hand experience in outreach oral health care and health promotion, which are her core areas of teaching. Some of her interests are multi-professional team work, international collaboration, health care supervision and research on oral health education.

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