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0445 Change in the Dentist Population in Hong Kong between 1981 and 2001

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Background: The only dental school in Hong Kong was formally established in 1982. Before that all the dentists in Hong Kong were trained abroad. Objective: To describe the change in the dentist population in Hong Kong over the 20 years between 1981 and 2001. Method: The source of information was the list of registered dentists published by the Hong Kong government in 1981 and that in 2001. In the list was the name of the dentists, together with their professional qualifications and practice addresses. Gender of the dentist was deduced from the name. As the dentists in Hong Kong are legally required to renew their registration with the Hong Kong Dental Council every year, information in the dentists list should be accurate and update. The data were input into a computer and analyzed with SPSS for Windows. Results: There were 631 registered dentists in Hong Kong in 1981. With a resident population of 5.1 million at that time, the dentist to population ratio was 1:8,100. Twenty years later in 2001, there were 1,631 dentists among the 6.7 million people and the ratio had improved to 1:4,100. Between 1981 and 2001, there had been an increase in the proportion of female dentists from 10.3% to 20.5% ($p<0.001$) and the proportion of dentists with at least one postgraduate qualification (7.1% vs 21.4%, $p<0.001$). Over the same time period, the proportion of private dentists who worked in only one clinic decreased from 75.7% to 67.5% ($p<0.001$). It was also found that many dentists had established practices in areas outside the central commercial districts and thus greatly improved the access to dental care. Conclusion: It is concluded that there has been major changes in the dental profession in Hong Kong since the establishment of a dental school in 1982.

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