



Dental Career Feature

Pursuing Different Facets of a Dental Medical Career

If you have always been interested in dentistry but also find yourself drawn to the thought of being a doctor or a surgeon, then why not combine the two into a medical dental job? There are a few different options available to you. You could be an oral surgeon or even a maxillofacial surgeon.

Maxillofacial surgeons perform surgery on the mouth, jaw, and related head and neck structures for various reasons. This could be for the extraction of multiple teeth. A dentist could easily remove one tooth if there were no complications, but the extraction of multiple teeth at one time is better left to a surgeon. Oral surgeons could also perform surgery in order to remove tumors or other abnormal growths. If a patient has severe abnormalities of the jaw then surgeons can also help to correct this by mandibular or maxillary revision. If a patient has been in a drastic accident and has had his or her jaw fractured then the individual may need the surgeon to treat the broken bone. Oral surgeons may also prepare a patient's mouth for the insertion of dental prosthesis of some kind or other.

In order to pursue [dental opportunities](#) in a [medical job](#), candidates must obtain a lot of specific education first. Dental school itself lasts about four years. This covers classroom as well as laboratory work. Also, during the last two years of schooling, students gain experience actually treating patients in dental clinics. They may even get an internship during this time, depending on how demanding their schooling is, to gain even more experience. At the end of four years successful students obtain either a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) or a DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine). These are the types of degrees regular dentists hold, and if one wants to become an OMS (oral and maxillofacial surgeon) he or she must pursue four more years of training in a dental, medical, and surgical postdoctoral program where the focus is on the diagnosis, treatment, and management of problems in the oral and

maxillofacial region. After this degree is completed, graduates must complete a residency before performing procedures on their own. In addition to schooling all dentists and oral surgeons must obtain state licensure for whichever state they wish to practice in.

Some characteristics which would be valuable for OMSs include good critical thinking skills and a strong ability to make good judgment calls and decisions. Good candidates must also excel in science courses. Essential abilities to this profession include finger and manual dexterity (the hands must be used in a very small area to perform delicate surgeries); arm-hand steadiness (for the same reason as listed above); and good near vision so they are able to see details of objects at close range, though this can usually be helped with the aid of special glasses used for surgery.

The outlook for [dental jobs](#) in the field of oral and maxillofacial surgeons is good. Most job openings will result for other surgeons retiring, but there are a few openings around the country if you are willing to move. Also, because oral hygiene has improved so much over the last few decades, elderly people are more likely to retain their natural teeth, and so will need more care.

In 2006 the median income for OMSs was in excess of \$145,600 per year. This is a very lucrative field, though it takes several years to become qualified. However, if you wish to pursue [dental job opportunities](#), this could be a very rewarding career both personally and financially.

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