



Eli Eliav

## Should dentists get MS and PhD degrees?

Many dentists earn master's or even PhD degrees in addition to their clinical and specialty training certificates. Various specialty programs have a master's degree included in the curriculum, and some even compel the students to include this as part of their training. Although higher degrees are not the same everywhere, and do not always involve the dentist in a traditional research project, attending these programs will always require additional work and more of the dentist's time. But what is the value of these higher degrees to the dentist, the patients, and our profession?

The main downside is the time and focus required. If a further degree is done alongside clinical training, it may take the focus and valuable training time away from an already very busy program. A simple solution, of course, is to extend the duration of training for students that attend a master's program. However, this is not easy to do, considering the tuition burden and debt that dentists may carry.

In spite of this, in my opinion going through research training and acquiring additional higher degrees is valuable. It gives the dentist an additional perspective that can make her or him a better healthcare provider. It may also allow a better understanding of the development and validation process of new treatments, methods, or materials.

Dentistry is becoming an evidence-based profession, and is no longer based on instructors' own experiences. Exposure to research is required by most of the specialty programs in the world. However, adding depth by coupling it with a master's degree may improve the training.

Dentists with a higher degree can be excellent clinicians who understand research, or become full time researchers who understand clinical needs. In both cases the patients and the profession benefit.

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