An introduction to the School of Stomatology, Wuhan University

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The School of Stomatology of Hubei Medical College was founded in 1960. It was the first dental school in mainland China established entirely by the new Chinese government that came to power in 1949. Prior to 1949, there were only six dental schools in China, i.e. Dental School of West China Union University; Dental Department of Peking University Health Center; Dental School of National Central University; Dental Department of Shanghai Aurora University Health Center; Shanghai Private Dental College; and Dental School of Harbin Medical University. In 2000, the School was incorporated into Wuhan University and named the School of Stomatology, Wuhan University (WHUSS) [Figure 1]. After more than 40 years of development, WHUSS has now become one of the top dental schools in China, known for its facilities, faculty, education and research achievements.

The Hospital of the School of Stomatology, Wuhan University

The WHUSS Hospital is one of the largest oral health care centers in China. Apart from its main clinic in Wuchang, the hospital has eight satellite clinics distributed across different areas of Wuhan providing dental care to the community. Recently, the hospital has expanded its health care system by establishing a dental hospital in Dongguan in Guangdong Province through a joint venture with Cheung Kong Holdings Limited in Hong Kong. Another dental hospital in the city of Yichang in Hubei Province has been founded as well.

The outpatient section of the WHUSS Hospital has 280 dental chairs and handles, on average, more than 1000 visits a day. Each year, the hospital admits up to 2000 inpatients into the 100-bed surgical wards. There are 17 clinical departments and laboratories in the hospital. Diagnostic and therapeutic care from the Departments
of Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, and Prosthodontics offer state-of-the-art services for the communities in Wuchang and beyond. Information technology is widely utilized within the hospital. The WHUSS Hospital from time to time offers services for patients from other parts of China, including patients from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

Education

The WHUSS Hospital is also one of the main education centers for stomatology in China. Every year, more than 200 students/dentists from all over the country and overseas enroll in its Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD degree programs as well as in other continuing education training. Professor Mingwen Fan, Honorary Dean of WHUSS and Vice-chairman of the Chinese Stomatological Association, is the first Chinese dentist to serve as President of the IADR Pan-Asia Pacific Section. Professor Zhuan Bian of WHUSS is the Vice-chairman of the Chinese Stomatological Association and one of the famous endodontists in China.

Many young talents have recently been recruited to the WHUSS. Strong manpower has greatly improved the development of all disciplines. The school is currently undergoing progressive innovation in its educational approaches. Problem-based learning is implemented to enable integration between basic and clinical sciences to enhance clinical reasoning and knowledge retention.\(^1,3\) Bilingual teaching is used in all courses while endodontics and orthodontics are entirely in English.\(^1,4\) A simulation laboratory with state-of-the-art facilities has been installed in the school to fully prepare the students for clinical training.\(^1,5,6\) (Figure 3).

Undergraduate and postgraduate education

The WHUSS offers a 5-year Bachelor’s degree program, a 7-year Master’s degree program, as well as an 8-year doctorate program. A joint clinical Master’s degree program is also provided, which includes the Bachelor’s degree program with an additional 2 years of advanced clinical and basic research training.

For postgraduate program, an MPhil or PhD is awarded after at least 3 years’ residence in the related research program following acquisition of the course credits and defense of the dissertation. The Master’s Degree in Stomatological Medicine was introduced in 2000 to provide advanced clinical training for specialists. The candidates involved in this program will be granted the Degree after at least 2 years of strict, systematic clinical training and completion of compulsory course credits as well as clinical research.

The WHUSS emphasizes the importance of strengthening international communication and collaboration with overseas academic dental institutions. Every year, the student exchange program attracts a great deal of attention which operates between WHUSS and cooperative schools scattered in North America, Europe, and Asia. Among them are dental schools from the Nijmegen University of Netherlands, the Thammasat University from Thailand, and the University of Hong Kong. Students recruited to the program have the opportunity to gain access to the latest developments, information, and...
Research

The WHUSS is a research-oriented dental school. The research center was established in 1985 with the Key Laboratory for Oral Biomedical Engineering (KLOBE) approved by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

There are five divisions in the KLOBE:
1. Pathogenicity, prevention, and cure of oral bacterial plaque disease;
2. Study and research on oral maxillofacial development and hereditary disease;
3. Mechanism of tumor metastasis and recurrence in the oral maxillofacial region;
4. Mechanism of pain and functional disturbance in the oral maxillofacial region; and
5. Biology of odontic and maxillofacial prosthesis.

More than 100 papers by WHUSS were published in international journals. For example, Ye et al. 7 provided evidence that Weyers acrofacial dysostosis and Ellis-van Creveld syndrome are allelic and genetically heterogeneous conditions. Another publication on the construction and immunogenic characterization of a fusion anti-caries DNA vaccine suggested that a multigenic DNA vaccine may prevent more caries than single-gene DNA vaccine 8.

The WHUSS strongly promotes and supports research and the faculty is active in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. Undergraduate and postgraduate students have the opportunity to address an extensive variety of dental research questions, supported by comprehensive information facilities, state-of-the-art equipment, and internationally renowned scholars.

Conclusions

For the past few years, WHUSS has successfully established cooperative relationships with over 10 universities, colleges, and scientific research institutions around the world and the number is increasing with time. Following the rapid pace of economic growth in China, dentistry in mainland China will also benefit greatly from this expeditious development 9. The door of WHUSS is always open and welcomes reciprocal research/education collaborations with universities all over the world. Our ultimate goal is to aim for excellence in all our endeavors.

References