



OBJECTIVE

To assess graduate residents' satisfaction regarding the program's curriculum and readiness for clinical practice and board exams.

BACKGROUND

Texas A&M College of Dentistry's (TAMCOD) pediatric dental residency program is in Dallas, Tx., and is one of 82 pediatric dental residencies in the United States. The program offers a 24-month certificate degree or an optional 36-month program to pursue a Master of Science degree in oral biology. Residents can also elect to pursue a certificate or masters in public health.

The program's curriculum is balanced with clinical and didactic experience from the university. Clinically, residents at this program receive training in advanced diagnosis and treatment planning, traumatic injuries (emergency call), behavior management (pharmacological and non-pharmacological), and phase I orthodontics. The program also discusses prevention, hospital and operating room protocol, and full mouth rehabilitation strategies. Residents of this program work at multiple clinics and hospitals (TAMCOD graduate pediatric dental clinic, Children's Medical Center, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital, and community clinics) around the DFW area, allowing them to have experience in treating a wide variety of patient populations. The program places emphasis on hospital dentistry, special health care needs patient care, and sedation.

Didactically, TAMCOD-pediatric curriculum consists of core courses in biomedical sciences, which are taken alongside other specialty programs. Pediatric dentistry specific courses are offered in the style of case conferences, lectures, literature reviews, presentations, and seminar style. The didactic courses are about 20% of the program overall.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Approval to conduct this retrospective review of existing data was granted by TAMU Institutional Review Board (STUDY2025-0018). Voluntary surveys were emailed via SurveyMonkey to graduates of TAMCOD's pediatric dental program within their first-year post-residency to assess the satisfaction with the program. The survey included questions about the program's curriculum, clinical/didactic experiences during residency, and level of preparedness for clinical practice and ABPD exams.

RESULTS

- 55 surveys were emailed to the class of 2019-2024 graduates (excluding class of 2020 due to the pandemic), and 49 responses were obtained.
- Response rate was 89%.
- Orthodontics- clinical treatment and IV conscious sedation received the most "inadequate" ratings (n=36, n=24 respectively).
- The 3rd and 4th most identified areas of clinical training weakness was sedation and pulp treatment.

RESULTS

FIGURE 1: RESIDENT'S PERCEPTION OF THEIR TIME DEDICATED TO EACH CATEGORY (N=49)

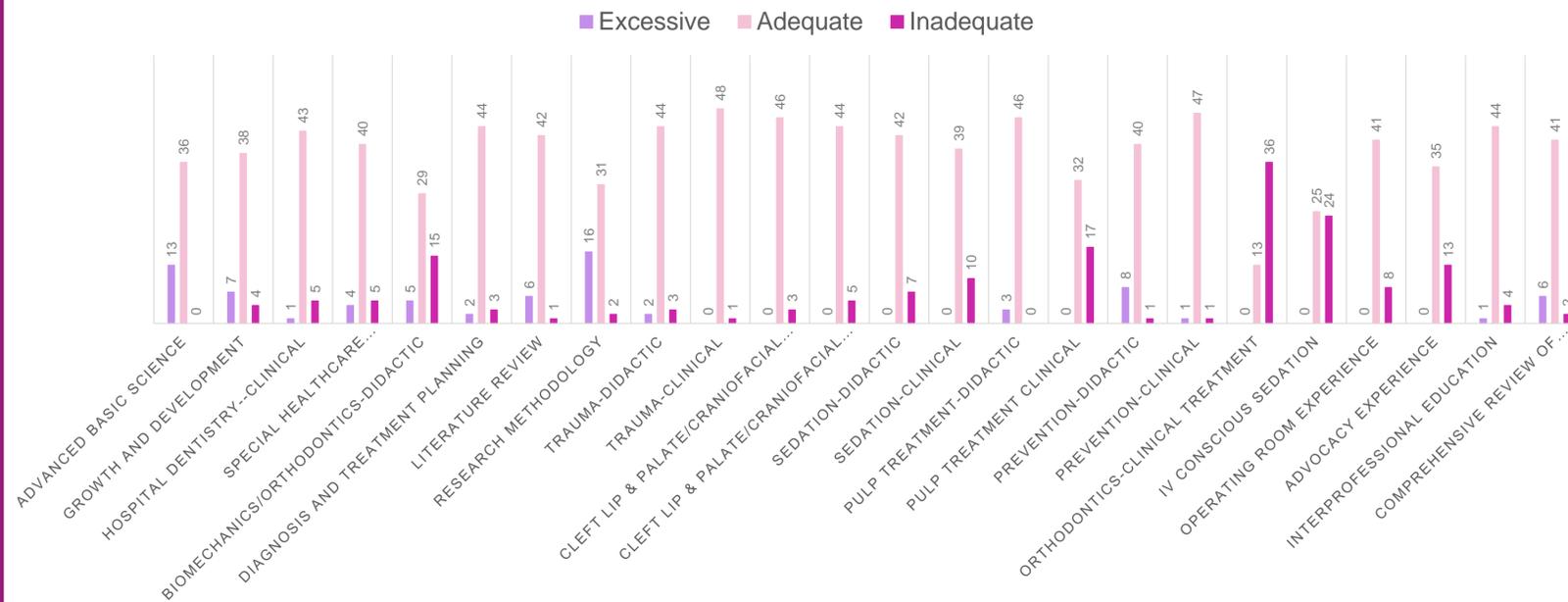


Figure 2: Orthodontics - Clinical Treatment Per Graduation Year (n=49)

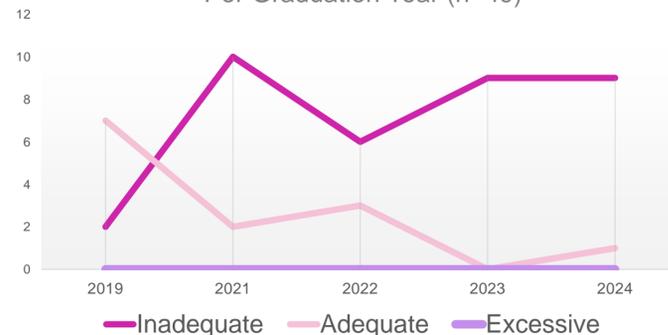


Figure 3: IV Conscious Sedation Per Graduation Year (n=49)

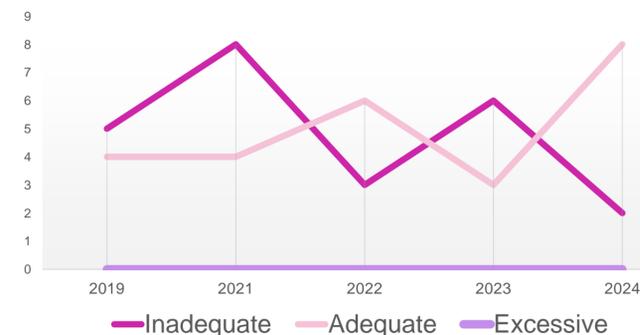
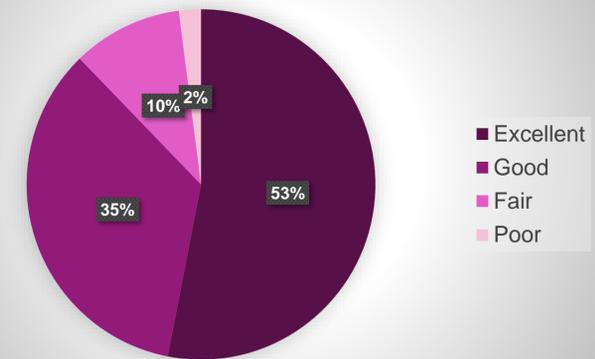


Figure 4: Practice Preparedness (n=49)



DISCUSSION

Clinical experience in orthodontics received the most "inadequate" responses when graduates were asked their perception of their time dedicated to each category (Fig. 1). In 2019, orthodontic experience in the clinic was adequate but experience declined during subsequent years (Fig. 2). This may be due to decreased patient appointments, delayed start of treatment due to COVID, and changes in family finances post-pandemic.

Although IV conscious sedation experience was the 2nd most cited category overall that graduate residents felt like their education was inadequate in, just as many graduates felt it was adequate. With increased exposure to IV sedation, most residents graduating in 2024 reporting adequate experience in IV conscious sedation (Fig. 3).

Upon completion of the program, more than 75% of graduated residents reported "excellent" or "good" when asked about their feeling of preparedness for practice post-residency (Fig. 4).

CONCLUSIONS

1. As anticipated, responses varied by graduates, but overall, orthodontics and IV sedation were the areas most frequently cited for improvement.
2. Based on survey results, the TAMCOD's Pediatric Residency program has prepared its graduates for the practice of pediatric dentistry.