



Comparison of dental licensure, specialization and continuing education in five countries.

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Abstract: Dental practice and education are becoming more globalized. Greater practitioner and patient mobility, the free flow of information, increasingly global standards of care and new legal and economic frameworks (such as European Union [EU] legislation) are forcing a review of dental licensure, specialization and continuing education systems. The objective of this study was to compare these systems in Canada, France, Germany, the UK and the US. Representatives from the five countries completed a 29-item questionnaire, and the information was collated and summarized qualitatively. Statutory bodies are responsible for licensing and re-licensing in all countries. In the two North American countries, this responsibility rests with individual states, and in Europe, with the countries themselves, mainly governed by the legal framework of the EU. In some countries, re-licensure requires completion of continuing education credits. Approaches to dental specialization tend to differ widely with regard to definition of specialities, course and duration of training, training facilities, and accreditation of training programmes. In most countries, continuing education is provided by a number of different entities, such as universities, dental associations, companies, institutes and private individuals. Accreditation and recognition of continuing education is primarily process-driven, not outcome-orientated. Working towards a global infrastructure for dental licensing, specialization and continuing education depends on a thorough understanding of the international commonalities and differences identified in this article.

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