

# Undergraduate Teaching and World Record Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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If, on the one hand, medical and allied health sciences have been advancing, especially due to the increase in new technologies, the differences in curricula and economic limitations in different regions of the world<sup>1</sup> still represent a challenging scenario for Colleges to train ethical, well-trained, and critical-thinking professionals. We agree that university teaching ideally should include the tripod, teaching, research, and extension aimed at both undergraduate and graduate students. However, undergraduate education has been, in many cases, limited to a minimum curriculum, mainly in Institutions based in developing and/or low-income countries. Moreover, e-learning, although widely used during the critical periods of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, still has many obstacles to overcome to reach the full satisfaction of undergraduate students.<sup>2,3</sup>

With that in mind and with the aim of stimulating more thought and discussion, we share some of the successful experiences of undergraduate teaching at our University during the health emergency and discuss points of view and ideas that we have in common about the subject. First, the final year dentistry student, Sai Charan Lingam, reports through brief reflections his considerations and perspectives on undergraduate teaching, as well as on his recent and honorable world record achieved in the field of dentistry during the pandemic period.<sup>4</sup>

"As an undergraduate, I wanted to do something out of the box and came up with the idea of doing a world record for being the youngest to practice canine-to-canine veneer treatment on a patient. Here in our Institution, we undergraduates can routinely be involved in handling various types of cases since we have a system with comprehensive and safe clinics instead of single department postings. This is like dealing with a normal clinical procedure in our daily lives, where we have the opportunity to treat numerous different cases. Thus, through this comprehensive clinic system, I have gained a lot of self-confidence in treating patients and in my work, which played an important role in achieving world records. The level of confidence we reach when learning how to develop a work of excellence within the University is undoubtedly very important as we replicate such knowledge throughout our lives and careers. Every undergraduate dental student should always keep striving to improve their hand skills. This world record was mainly done to improve the standards of patient care at the undergraduate level and to tell my fellow batchmates how important it is to boldly embark on our opportunities when we have a world-class dental platform provided by the University. My College helped and motivated me throughout the process, and I had gained this confidence in large part because of its amazing operation."

Another important point to be discussed is the viability of face-to-face teaching. Although e-learning is a reality and a

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relevant tool adopted by many Universities, we strongly believe that face-to-face contact with professors and/or patients is essential for effective professional training in the field of health sciences. In light of this, with the exception of critical periods, such as lockdowns, the continuity of face-to-face higher education in this area should be encouraged whenever possible, combined with the adoption of preventive protocols. We also agree that offering research opportunities during undergraduate education is fundamental both for high-level professional training and for the continuity of the advancement of education. This is true even for periods of health emergencies. Despite this must be a barrier to be faced by many Institutions in the world, more investments in this path are also imminently needed. Finally, we hope that our testimonials and reflections will stimulate more positive actions and the appreciation of the higher education landscape, especially in the field of health sciences.

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