**Student Perception on Institution Exam Format and National Board Dental Examination Preparedness**

Megann Lear, Irina Dragan, Sarah Pagni, Aruna Ramesh, Eileen Doherty.

**Objective:** Tufts University School of Dental Medicine implemented new guidelines for all course examinations to follow the format of the National Board Dental Examination in January 2020. The purpose of the present study was to identify TUSDM student perceptions on the exam format change as well as institutional preparation for boards examination.

**Methods:** Fourth-year Tufts Dental students who have taken either the National Board Dental Examination Part II or the Integrated National Board Dental Examination were recruited to participate in semi-structured 30-minute virtual interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom with X students. The data was recorded, transcribed, and then evaluated. Data analysis was conducted in three phases by 1 investigator: (1) immersion in data, creation of initial code list, coding data, and iteratively revising the code list; (2) creating clusters of codes, generating themes, and consulting literature; (3) providing explanatory models.

**Results:** Seven students from TUSDM Class of 2022 participated. All interviewed participants detected the change in exam format. Student perceptions regarding this change revealed themes relating to a lack of standardization with examination items of the previous format, increased exposure to a format that mirrors the national board examination, and no requirement for knowledge beyond the scope of the national board examination. Participants agreed that the didactic curriculum at TUSDM provided a baseline knowledge for board examination but that additional materials were required to adequately prepare. Participants also suggested that the specificity of certain board examination items was to the fault of the items themselves rather than a failing of institutional preparation.

**Conclusion:** Based on the perceptions of these participants, altering examination guidelines to those of the National Board Dental Examination is an important step in preparing students. Institutions could additionally provide access to adjunct study materials and strive to standardize items on all examinations across all subjects. This study might help to identify institutional strategies to better prepare students for boards examination.