

Introduction

The transition from dental school to residency is a critical phase marked by increased clinical responsibility and exposure to emergency care. On-call duties are a required component of many GPR and Pediatric Dentistry programs and are often perceived as stressful. Dental school curricula have evolved to include more evidence-based content and earlier clinical exposure, yet the question of whether dental school adequately prepares graduates for the acute, unpredictable nature of on-call work has received minimal attention. Hospital emergency departments have seen a steady rise in dental-related visits. Studies show 80% of after-hours dental visits at children's hospitals involve traumatic injuries. Residents are often the primary providers fielding these cases.

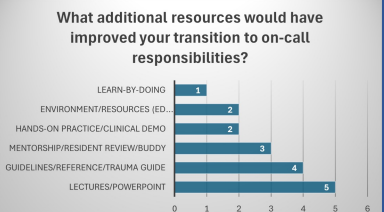
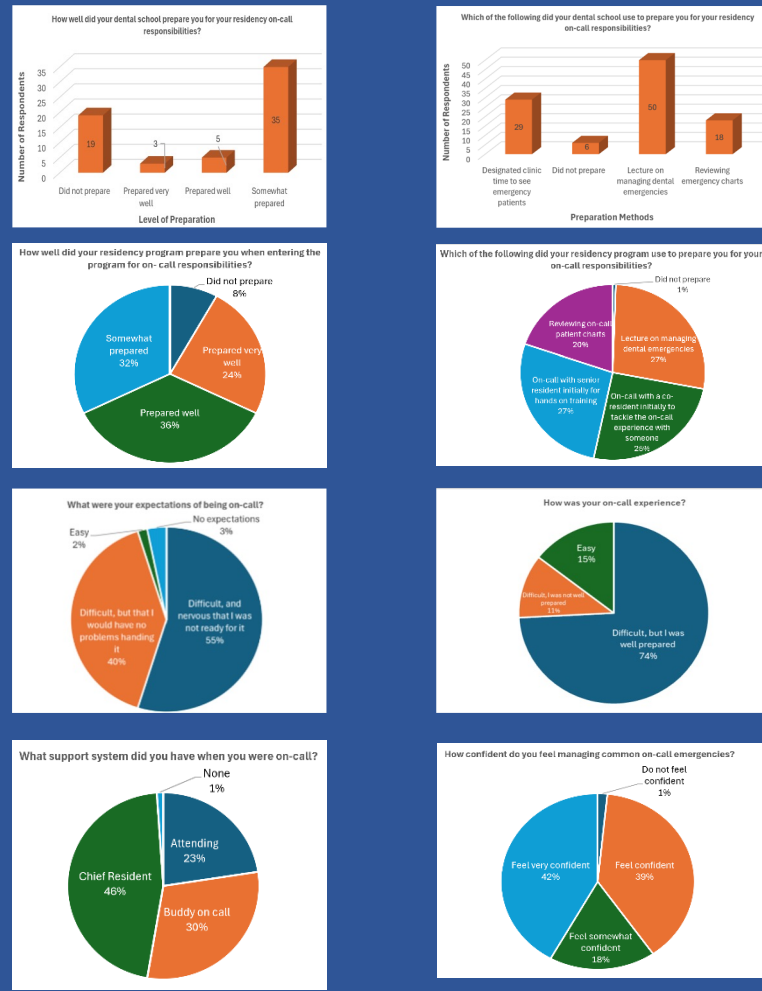
Purpose

This study aims to evaluate how effectively dental schools and residency programs prepare residents for on-call responsibilities by surveying PGY-2 residents in GPR and Pediatric Dentistry programs, along with recent graduates in New York.

Methods

Study Design: Cross-sectional survey of PGY-2 residents in GPR and Pediatric Dentistry programs and recent graduates from New York programs.
Survey Instrument: Nine-question survey covering pre-residency expectations, dental school preparation, residency training methods, on-call support systems, confidence, and desired improvements. Distributed via REDCap.
Data Collection: Distributed electronically to program directors at accredited GPR and Pediatric Dentistry programs in New York. Program directors forwarded the survey to PGY-2 residents and recent graduates. Anonymous and voluntary. Open for six weeks with biweekly reminders.
Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, categorical classifications). Open-ended responses grouped by recurring themes.

Results



n = 62 respondents |
 GPR & Pediatric
 Dentistry Residents
 + Recent Graduates

Results

Pre-Residency Expectations: 95% anticipated on-call would be difficult. 55% felt nervous; 40% expected difficulty but felt confident.
Dental School Preparation: 56% rated as "somewhat prepared." 31% said dental school did not prepare them at all.
Residency Training: Co-resident pairing (27%), senior resident mentorship (27%), lectures (25%). Only 1% received no preparation.
On-Call Support: Chief resident most common (46%), buddy on call (30%), attending (23%).
Retrospective Experience: 74% difficult but manageable. 15% easy. 11% difficult and unprepared.
Confidence in managing on-call responsibilities: 42% very confident, 39% confident, 18% somewhat confident.

Conclusion/Discussion

Most residents ultimately feel capable of managing on-call duties (74% manageable, 81% confident/very confident). However, the path to competence varies significantly. Nearly one-third of respondents said dental school did not prepare them for on-call at all. This aligns with findings by Rutkauskas et al., where only 55% of first-year pediatric residents felt adequately prepared.²² Residency training methods varied widely with no standardized approach. Perez et al. identified similar inconsistencies in medical anesthesia programs and recommended bootcamp-style orientations and structured feedback.¹⁹ Peer support structures appeared beneficial—46% had chief resident coordination, and Calvo & Hasan found 70% of dental emergencies at UCSF could be managed through phone consultation.⁵

Key Recommendations:

- Dental schools should expand emergency preparedness training beyond lectures.
- Residency programs would benefit from standardized on-call orientation frameworks.
- Accessible clinical reference materials and trauma guides are needed.
- Mentorship and peer support systems during on-call shifts are valued.
- Simulation-based training may build confidence prior to independent practice.

These changes are concrete, achievable, and could meaningfully improve resident readiness and patient care. Future findings from this study may help dental schools better prepare students for the real world demands of on-call residency.