

Systems for the provision of oral health care in Black Sea countries.

Part 3: Moldova

Sergiu Ciobanu¹, Pavel Godoroja², Ion Lupan³, Anatolie Pancenco⁴

¹ Ph.D., D.D.S. Associate Professor, Dental Faculty, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy 'Nicolae Testemitanu', Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. ² Ph.D., D.D.S. Professor, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy 'Nicolae Testemitanu', Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. ³ Ph.D., D.D.S. Senior Specialist of Health Ministry in Dentistry, Chairman, Surgical and Paediatric Dentistry, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. ⁴ Ph.D., D.D.S. Director of Dental Services for the Chisinau District, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

Abstract

This paper outlines the system for providing oral health care in the Republic of Moldova. It explains how, since 2006, the state (national) health insurance scheme has funded some oral health care for children and adolescents under the age of 18 years and some priority groups. However, most oral health care is paid for privately. It then describes the Moldovan dental workforce, which in 2008 consisted of 1535 dentists (dental doctors/stomatologists), 795 dental technicians, and 526 chair-side assistants. Details follow of dental education for dentists (dental doctors/stomatologists), at undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing levels, and for dental technicians. Data are presented from the three national epidemiological studies that have been performed into dental caries in 12- and 15-year-old children. The paper concludes with data on the costs of health care and oral health care in Moldova.

Key Words: Moldova, Oral Health Care System, Dental Workforce, Dental Education

Introduction

This paper is the third in a series that describes the systems for the provision of oral health care in the countries that surround the Black Sea. It is the first to describe the oral health care system in the Republic of Moldova. The data quoted in this paper have come from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova [1], the Moldovan Doctors Association [2], and the Director of Public Health for Chisinau [3]. In 2008, the population of the Republic of Moldova was 3,572,000, including 798,700 children between 0 and 17 years of age. The country is made up of 32 counties, three districts (Chisinau, Balti, and Tigina), and three regions with special status (UTA, Gagauzia, and Transnistria). Transnistria's population is not included in the 3,572,000.

The County and its Health Insurance System

A compulsory health insurance scheme has operated in Moldova since 2004 [4]. In this system, between 2004 and 2008 employers and employees both paid 2% (a total of 4% of salary or wages). Children and adolescents under 18 years of age,

pregnant women, people with disabilities, students, and retired people do not pay contributions to the health insurance scheme but are insured nevertheless. Since 2006, there has been some oral health care provision within the overall health insurance system. It has covered basic services, including relief of pain, other dental emergencies, care for children and pregnant women. In 2009, contributions from employers rose to 2.5% of salary/wages for every employee. The health insurance scheme is administered by a company, with offices in the 32 counties and three districts. In the Republic of Moldova, only one state medical insurance company exists and it is related to the Health Ministry.

The Provision of Oral Health Care

As previously mentioned, a limited system has existed since 2006 for the provision of oral health care within the national health insurance scheme. The following services have been included in this partial system:

- Relief of dental pain and other dental emergencies.
- Treatment for children and adolescents up to the age of 18 years, including consultations,

Corresponding author: Prof. Dr. Sergiu Ciobanu, Dental Faculty, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy 'Nicolae Testemitanu', Chisinau, Republic of Moldova; e-mail: serciobanu@yahoo.com, serciobanu@mail.ru

prophylactic treatment, such as fissure sealing and local fluoride application, and conservative treatment [5].

In the Republic of Moldova, the insurance company covers dental emergencies (tooth extractions, pulpitis, acute periapical lesions), prophylactic procedures (fissure sealing, fluoridation, amalgam and cement fillings) for children (orthodontic treatment is not included), treatment of dental caries and endodontic treatment for adolescents up to 18 years of age. These treatments are also provided for pregnant women, except for prosthetic treatment. Oral cancer is treated in the Republican Oncological Institute; all expenses for treatment at this institute are covered by the state [6].

Fixed orthodontics, implants, fixed and removable prosthodontics, and periodontal surgery are not included and are provided privately, along with all oral health care for those people who are not covered by the national health insurance scheme.

The insurance company contracts with public dental polyclinics to provide services that are included within the health insurance scheme [7].

The Dental Workforce

In 2008, the number of dentists working in Moldova was 1535, of whom 902 (59%) worked in the public service and 633 (41%) in the private sector. Slightly over half (797; 52%) were women and just under half (738; 48%) were men. The numbers of dentists graduating from the only dental school in Moldova in selected years between 1990 and 2008 are shown in *Figure 1*.

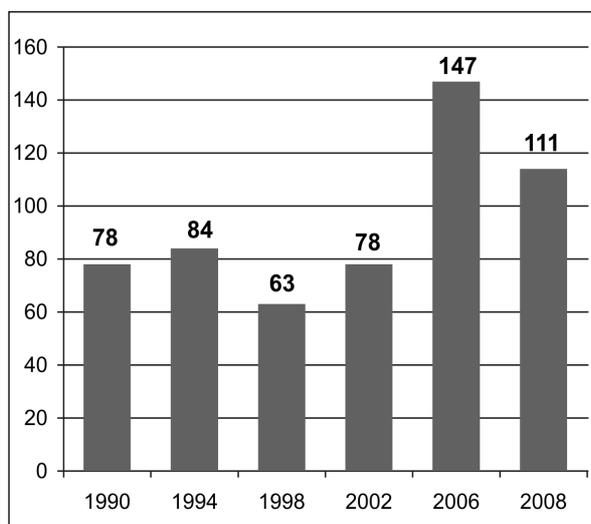


Figure 1. Number of dentists graduating in the Republic of Moldova in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2008.

A proportion of dental students come from Romania and on graduation, along with a number of Moldovans, leave Moldova and practise (work) in other countries.

No data are currently available on the number of specialists, which makes workforce planning and the development of dental specialties difficult. However, the topic is under discussion [8].

At present, there are no practising dental hygienists and there is no school for dental hygienists. In 2007, there were 750 dental technicians. In 2008, the number rose to 796. Most work in private dental laboratories. Some 3067 medical assistants were registered with Health Ministry, of whom 526 were employed in 2008 [9].

The Medical College of the Republic of Moldova trains medical assistants. However, this training does not include specific training to enable them to work as dental (stomatological) assistants. Nevertheless, after training 'on the job', a number of medical assistants work as dental assistants in dental (stomatological) clinics in Moldova.

Dental Education

Dentists in Moldova are called dental doctors or stomatologists. They are trained at the only dental school in Moldova, which is the Dental Faculty of the State Medical and Pharmacy University 'Nicolae Testemitanu' in Chisinau. It is a public dental school and is funded by the Government (state). There are no private dental schools in the Republic of Moldova.

Students pay fees for their education. However, those who demonstrate excellent academic performance can receive discounts on their fees of between 25% and 75%. The undergraduate dental course last for five years. In the first two years, basic sciences are taught together with pre-clinical training in dental therapy, dental prosthodontics, cariology, prevention, and oral surgery. The final three years are devoted to clinical dentistry. There is then a state graduation examination, which includes a practical part. Students are assessed on their communication skills with patients, their application of theoretical knowledge to clinical practice, their knowledge of new methods and technologies, a clinical case report, a thesis, and a written examination. On graduation, the new dentist receives a diploma of dental doctor (stomatologist). After graduating, some dental doctors undertake a three-year internship (training) in one of two specialities (general stomatology/den-

tistry or orthodontics) or a five-year training in oromaxillofacial surgery. Training in these specialties concludes with an examination and a licence. It is also possible to take a doctorate in philosophy (PhD) but this is not compulsory.

Of those who undertake specialist training, up to five per year train in orthodontics for three years, one or two in oromaxillofacial surgery for five years, and the others in general stomatology for three years. All specialist trainees work under the supervision of an existing specialist. After completing specialist training (residency), they have to pass a specialist licensing examination. They are then appointed to work in a specific location by the Health Ministry. For Moldovan nationals, specialist education (three or five years working as a resident) is financed by the state. Nationals from other countries have to pay for this training.

All postgraduate (specialist) training takes place at the Medical University, where the Dental Faculty has work contracts with private dental clinics for postgraduate clinical training in collaboration with the Faculty.

Efforts have been made to provide dental education that conforms to that provided in the European Union (EU). However, at present, in Moldova, unlike in most dental faculties, oral surgery, periodontology, and endodontics are not separate academic disciplines. The reasons for this include a lack of space and finance, and — sometimes — even the lack of a will to change.

The vast majority of dentists (dental doctors/stomatologists) are members of Stomatological Doctors Association of the Republic of Moldova (SDARM). This association organises a range of

continuing education activities. Attendance at these events and involvement in postgraduate education gains points. All dentists (dental doctors/stomatologists) are required to take part in continuing professional education and to gain 400 points every five years.

As previously mentioned, there are no training courses for dental hygienists and dental assistants in Moldova. Dental technicians train at the Republican Medical College for three years and at the end of their education, they pass licensing examinations organised by the Ministry of Health. Their registration is held by the Ministry of Health. However, unlike dentists, they are placed in specific locations. A Dental Technicians' Association is in the course of formation.

Epidemiology

There have been no comprehensive national epidemiological studies of adult oral health in Moldova. However, there have been three national studies (in 1992, 1997, 2008) of dental caries in children aged 12 and 15 years [10]. These studies have suggested that the prevalence of dental caries in children in this age group has risen from a mean DMFT of 2.2 in 1992 to 3.3 in 1997 and 3.5 in 2008 in 12-year-old children, and from 2.5 in 1989, to 3.7 in 1997 and 4.0 in 2008 in 15-year-old children.

Costs

In 2008, 5.4% of the public budget was spent on health, of which only 0.5% was spent by the Health Ministry on oral health. The amount of money spent on private oral health care is unknown as it is paid directly to dentists (dental doctors/stomatologists) by patients.

References

1. Ministry of Health. [Public Health in the Republic of Moldova. Annual Report.] Chisinau: Ministry of Health, Republic of Moldova; 2008. Moldovan.
2. Godoroja P. [Stomatological assistance for children in the Republic of Moldova. Actual problems in stomatology.] In Proceedings of the XI National Stomatological Doctors Congress of the Republic of Moldova; 2001 Oct 9-10; Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. Moldovan.
3. Godoroja P. Programului national de sanatate orala la copii în Republica Moldova. Probleme actuale de stomatologie. [Realisation of national program of oral health at children in the Republic of Moldova. Actual problems in stomatology.] In Proceedings of the XI National Stomatological Doctors Congress of the Republic of Moldova; 2003 Oct 3-4; Chisinau, Republic of Moldova; pp 1-3. Moldovan.
4. Godoroja P, Dulghieru O. [Propedeutics and Preventive Dentistry.] Chisinau: CEP Medicina; 2004: p. 217. Moldovan.
5. Pancenco A, Ciobanu S. [Evaluation and accreditation of medical stomatological services: decisional objective in quality management.] *Stomatological Medicine* 2007; **1**: 11-13. Moldovan.
6. Pancenco A. [The situation with the stomatologic service in the Chisinau municipal district.] *Sanatate Publica* 2006; **4**: 11-16. Moldovan.
7. Amarici C. [Introduction to stomatological management. The monograph.] *Romanian Medical Life* Bucharest; 1998: pp. 9-75, 81-97. Romanian
8. Pancenco A, Gobjila V, Gobjila L. [Objective strategic planning in the development of a stomatological service.] *Stomatological Medicine* 2008; **2**: 21-23. Moldovan.
9. Stomatologists' Association Republic of Moldova [website]. Accessed (2009 Aug 30) at: www.asrm.md. Moldovan.
10. Godoroja P, Sturza T, Spinei A. *Implementation of the National Programme of Children's Oral Health in the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau: UASM; 2007: pp. 16-21. Moldovan.