

My social work/policy experience as a senior dental student.

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The social area is of great importance, dentists not only work with mouths, tongues or teeth, as behind all that there is a person. Such person lives and is inserted in a community, and has social interactions. As dentists, we must take not only a biological approach, but work with people in a more holistic way, using a biopsychosocial approach.

My experience as a senior dental student in a Master in Social Work and Social Policies program has been very rewarding. Social work is different area, which although it has relation with Dentistry, it is a little developed area in our profession. In my undergraduate training I did not have any course that included social issues.¹

Most of my classmates in the Master program are social science professionals and teachers, all of whom have supported me and encouraged me. These professionals from other areas have realized the lack of development of social aspects in health-related careers. Moreover, Dentistry is perceived as an only for-profit and aesthetics profession.

Studying the Master in Social Work and Social Policies at the University of Concepción has helped me to expand this view of people and social processes. When people have impaired oral health is not exclusively their responsibility, rather it is the result of the sum of social determinants throughout their life. I have also realized that many of the preventive and curative plans and programs in Dentistry are poorly developed and executed.

We must stop blaming people for the situation they live in and begin to have a more self-critical attitude of our role as health professionals who treat people, not teeth.

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Conflict of interests: None.

Acknowledgements: None.

Cite as: Henríquez-Tejo R. My social work/policy experience as a senior dental student. J Oral Res 2017; 6(6):146.
[doi:10.17126/joralres.2017.048](https://doi.org/10.17126/joralres.2017.048)