



# The Opinion Of Students From The Specialty "Dental Technician" About The Establishment Of An Independent Student Section Within The Bulgarian Association Of Dental Technicians

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## ABSTRACT:

The professional development in the field of Dental Mechanics is largely determined and related to the training process in higher medical schools. The majority of the dental laboratories are directly linked to the educational process and contribute to the basic preparation of students. In May 2019 the first congress was held and the class organization of dental technicians was established. The organization has the obligation to protect the rights and interests of all the professionals in the field when interacting with the state and other public organizations. The present students are future dental technicians and members of the organization. The aim of the present study is to explore the opinions of students in relation to the establishment of an independent student section in the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT). A sociological method was applied to achieve this goal. The research was conducted from March to April 2022 and covered 52 students (first-year, second-year and third-year students – 48.60% in their training stage) and 31 first-year students from Medical College – Plovdiv (34.44% of the students in their training stage). Unfortunately, students from the Medical College of Sofia did not participate in the study. The analysis of the results led to the following conclusions: a significant part of the students are familiar with the class organization (87.10% of students from Plovdiv and 75.00% of students from Varna); the majority of the students are acquainted with the mandatory membership for all practitioners of the profession (64.51% of students from Plovdiv and 67.31% of students from Varna); a large part of the students declare their wish to form a student section within the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (72.99%) and want to be members (76.52%); the

majority of Dental Mechanics students state that there should be no membership fee. The results and conclusions based on the research reveal an opportunity for changes, which can be systematized in the following recommendation: the possibility of the establishment of a student section within the class organization to be discussed at the level of the National and Management Council.

**KEYWORDS:** Students, Student section, Class organisation, Research

## I. INTRODUCTION

From historical perspective the profession of the dental technician is relatively new[11]. A dental technician works in a team with a dentist and makes dental prostheses, orthodontic appliances and splints. The head of the team is the dentist [1,12]. The practical application of the activity is mainly carried out in private independent medical technical laboratories (IMTL). There are few specialist working as dental technicians in state organisations such as the Dental Faculties subordinate to the medical universities in Varna, Plovdiv and Sofia as well as in the University Center for Dental Medicine in the Medical University in Varna.

Medical care and health care activities are essential to people's lives and health and are carried out through regulated professions. The Council of Ministers accepts the list of regulated professions in the Republic of Bulgaria (Decision No. 28 of January 21, 2016) in this way applying specific requirements for the practice of medical professions and the possession of specific legal capacity, which are determined by legal and by-law provisions [3,6,11]. The profession of a dental technician also belongs to the list of medical care



jobs which is a legal prerequisite for dental technicians to have their own class organization.

According to the definition given in Art. 183, para. 1 of the Health Act, the medical profession is practised by people with a diploma of finished higher education in specialties of the specified professional fields such as Medicine, Dental medicine, Pharmacy and Health care. Only the professional field of Health Care includes several separate specialties with Dental Technician being one of them [6,7,10].

At the end of May 2019 (after a change in the Law on the Class Organization of Nurses, Midwives and Associate Medical Specialists at the end of 2018) the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT) was established as a class organization of practitioners in the profession.

Professional associations take over the functions of registration and admission to independent professional practice as well as the control of professional standards [4,11]. They regulate the activities of their members by introducing conditions for practicing the profession as well as by the powers presented to them by law to adopt rules of good practice and codes of ethics, to maintain registers, to control compliance with ethical norms and rules, to oblige their members to have continuing educational plans and so on [5,10]. The autonomous and voluntary nature of the organizations is expressed in their right to draw up and adopt their own statutes, to freely choose their representatives, to freely define their functions and carry out their activities being guided only by their economic and social interests, the current legislation of the country and the organisational statute [9,10,15].

The Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians has a Management Board which consists of a Chairman, two Vice-Chairmen, a General Secretary and 9 members. The headquarters of the organisation is in the city of Sofia [8,14]. All dental technicians practising the profession (private or public practitioners) are required to become members of BADT and pay membership fees. In the beginning, it is related to the minimum wage and is 2% of it [8]. At the moment, the amount is fixed at 120 BGN. Those who do not practise the profession can become members voluntarily [8,14].

The association has its own printed edition – a magazine called "Dental Mechanics Laboratory" – and its own website with a register of all members, statutes, regulations and information about its activities [14]. The fact that there has not been a statute book for the work of

the National Quality Council is strange and this area needs to be improved.

In the first issue of 2020 in the Dental Mechanics Laboratory magazine, there is an address to all the practitioners of the profession by the Chairman of BADT Mr. Ivan Burjev: "The establishment of BADT is a step towards unification. We work with the clear goal of building the class organisation in such a way that all its members recognize it as an organisation that protects their interests and defends their rights. Unity and positivism will be the step towards success and achievement of the goals we have set for ourselves, namely raising the profession to a higher level." [2,13].

The management of the organization attempts to protect the rights and interests of all the professionals in the field when interacting with the state and other public organizations but the outcomes are not always positive. The newly created class organisation has many complex tasks to solve in the future.

## II. AIM

The aim of the present study is to explore the opinions of students in relation to the establishment of an independent student section in the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT).

## III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sociological method has been used to serve the purpose of the study. The questionnaire has been designed by Assoc. Prof. Varneva. The research was conducted from March to April 2022 and covered 52 students (first-year, second-year and third-year students – 48.60% in their training stage) and 31 first-year students from Medical College – Plovdiv (34.44% of the students in their training stage). The research in Plovdiv has been carried out by Yordan Kovachev. A comparative analysis has been used in the group of all respondents. Data have been processed using Excel 2016.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to make an attempt to involve students in the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT), a survey has been conducted to study their attitudes to a future membership in BADT. Unfortunately, students from the Medical College of Sofia did not participate in the study. Figure 1 illustrates the students' awareness in regard to the existence of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT).

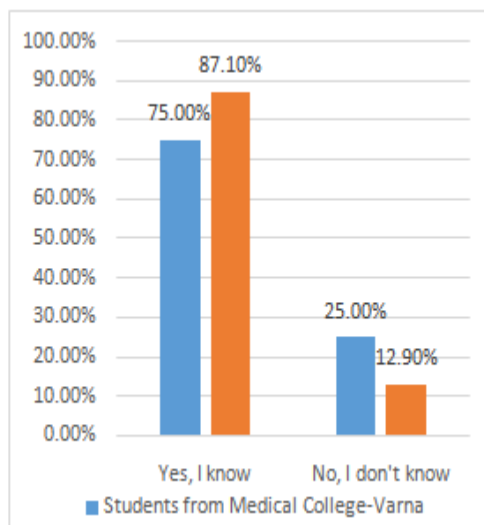


Figure. 1. Students' awareness of the existence of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (BADT)

A significant part of the respondents state that they are familiar with the existence of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians. It is worth to mention that almost all first-year students from the Medical College in Plovdiv are informed about the existence of BADT. The majority of respondents from the Medical College in Varna are also familiar with the class organisation. The opinions of students is a testimony to their interest in the profession.

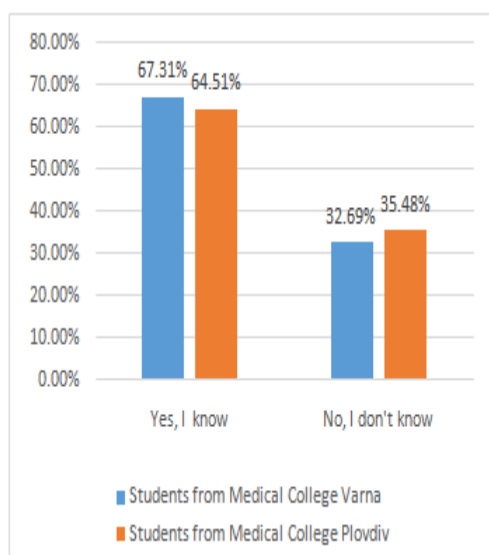


Figure 2. Students's awareness of the the obligatory membership in BADT as a condition for practising the profession

More than a half of the respondents reply that they are informed that the membership in the

class organisation is obligatory for those who practise the profession. The research has shown that students who are not aware of the existence of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians are also not acquainted with the mandatory membership. Figure 3 shows the eagerness of the students to be members of BADT and form a student section within the class organisation.

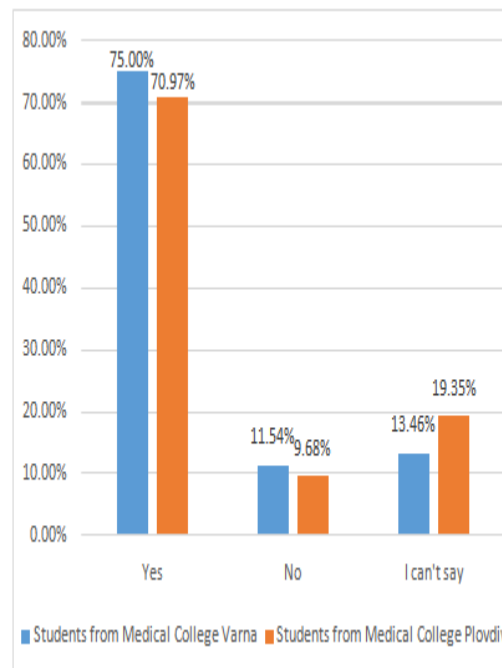


Figure3. Students's eagerness to form a student section within the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians

A significant part of the respondents support the idea of of creating a student section in the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians. This is to a large extent predefined by the fact that students will practise the profession and it is important that they are already informed about the problems of the class.

It is interesting to find out if students are willing to be members of the association. We found that their responses correlated with the data in Figure. 3. The majority declare a desire for membership. This will give them the opportunity to actively participate in the activities of the class organisation as well as to solve problems related to the development of the profession and the opportunity to express their own opinions and values. Very few of the respondents, who are not familiar with the existence of BADT, have given a negative answer. Just a small part of the students cannot judge and say perhaps because they are not informed about the role of the organization.



In addition to the fact that membership in the BADT is mandatory for all who practise the profession, there is also a mandatory membership fee, which is fixed and is the same for all members. It is paid at the beginning of the year until the end of March.

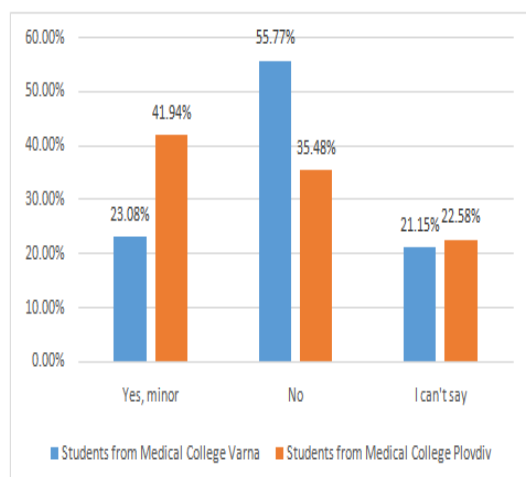


Figure 4. Annual membership fee for students willing to be members of the student section within BADT

The majority of respondents do not approve of the idea of paying membership fees. More than half of the surveyed students in Varna believe that there is no need to have a membership fee. Part of the students approve of a minimum membership fee (Plovdiv - 41.94% and Varna - 23.08%). Almost the same number of respondents from both colleges answered that they could not judge.

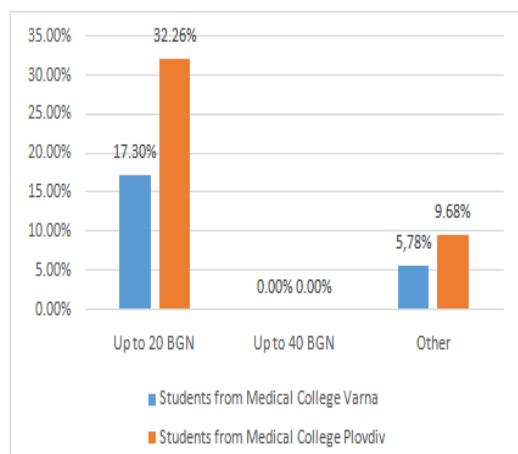


Figure 5. Appropriate amount for annual membership fee according to the students

A larger part of the students, who approve of the idea of a membership fee, think that a

reasonable amount is up to 20 Bulgarian lev. The rest of the respondents, who have provided an answer 'Other', have indicated a minor amount not exceeding 7 Bulgarian lev. According to research data and the opinions of the students if a student section is created, its members should not pay a membership fee.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the results led to the following conclusions:

1. A significant part of the students are familiar with the class organization (87.10% of students from Plovdiv and 75.00% of students from Varna);
2. The majority of the students are acquainted with the mandatory membership for all practitioners of the profession (64.51% of students from Plovdiv and 67.31% of students from Varna);
3. A large part of the students declare their wish to form a student section within the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians (72.99%) and want to be members (76.52%);
4. The majority of Dental Mechanics students state that there should be no membership fee.

The results and conclusions based on the research reveal an opportunity for changes, which can be systematized in the following **recommendation**:

- The possibility of the establishment of a student section within the class organization to be discussed at the level of the National and Management Council.

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