

The Indian Board of Forensic Odontology fellowship: A personal experience

Sir,

Forensic odontology after being included in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery curriculum in 2007^[1] has come long way. In spite of being a relatively young branch, it has proudly been in the forefront to absorb new hi-tech advances for practical use, which is quite evident in the research publications happening in Journal of Forensic Dental Sciences (JFDS), an official publication of the Indian Association of Forensic Odontology (IAFO).

Through this letter, I on behalf of many dental professional interested in Forensic Dentistry would like to congratulate the IAFO for constituting "The Indian Board of Forensic Odontology (IBFO)," to impart training in Forensic Odontology. I being one of the 52 students enrolled so far in 2 years, would like to share my personal experience with the readers of JFDS about this fellowship being offered.

Usually, the last date for accepting an application for the fellowship session is the end of November. This Certificate Fellowship is a distance learning program of 12 months duration with obligatory 1 week practical training at Department of Forensic Odontology, SDM College of Dental Sciences, Dharwad, (Karnataka). The course delivers a wide-ranging theoretical (mostly distant module) and explicit practical (including case-based) training in forensic odontology.

The learning experience gained facilitates the candidates to garner knowledge, skill, and confidence to probe and deliver the responsibilities of a Forensic Odontologist. The participants enrolled gain knowledge on various topics of forensic odontology, including age estimation (radiological/histological, etc.), bite mark examination, pattern marks analysis (lip prints, palatal rugae, etc.), child abuse Investigation, comparison of physical evidence, images, biological markers. Report writing as an expert in civil or criminal matter is an integral part of entire training.

Both theoretical and practical understanding gained is assessed through the conduct of theory and or practical examination. If found proficient and accomplished, the IBFO awards the successful candidate with the "Fellowship of the Indian Board of Forensic Odontology," issued by the IBFO (constituent of IAFO).

Road ahead: (Few suggestions to the curriculum designers, policy makers and stakeholders of this comprehensive fellowship from the observations and experiences during fellowship program):

- a. IBFO fellowship is making a huge change in the system of learning and opened great opportunities for everyone who wants to learn about forensic odontology. But addition of online lectures and updates will make the subject easier and interesting
- b. Right now, the 5 days contact program is located in Karnataka state only, with increase in demand and resource faculty such centers can be located at other places in India as well
- c. With increase in funds, a few deserving applicants can be given scholarship entry to the fellowship
- d. Forensic odontology is part of undergraduate dental curriculum in India. Recommendations should be made to Dental Council of India that fellows of IBFO (since they have a basic training in this field) should be given preference in teaching Forensic Odontology in dental institutions without internationally qualified forensic odontologist
- e. Topics on "Dental anthropology" and "Child abuse and neglected" should be given more emphasis as they are at a very rudimentary state in India
- f. As the number of fellows increase an alumnus group of fellows can be formed. This group can support IAFO in its activities and also help juniors who are pursuing the same fellowship.

In the end, I would vouch to readers that at the culmination of fellowship you will assuredly have new friendships, professional/academic connections, and innovative computer skills that will continue beyond your 12 months with IBFO.

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Nil.

Conflicts of interest

Author is not a stake holder and has no personal monetary interest in IBFO fellowship. This letter is just an opinion based on experience as a student enrolled for fellowship.


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Reference

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