

DOES IT MAKE SENSE FOR DENTISTS TO HAVE AN MBA? AN ANALYSIS OF JOINT MBA/DDS DEGREE PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Business acumen plays an important role in the effective organization and delivery of health care services. It is not surprising, therefore, to see a rise in the number of health care programs that also include an opportunity to obtain business training. Unfortunately, few studies have systematically examined such programs. Does it make sense to have dual healthcare/business degree programs? The purpose of this study is to further the discussion in this area by evaluating the present status and future relevance of one such program: the dual DDS/MBA degree. The results of an audit of all DDS/MBA programs in the U.S. suggest that the time and monetary costs associated with obtaining the degree will likely exceed the benefits, at least in the initial years following completion of the degrees. This is based on the argument that the DDS/MBA degree, unlike other dual-degree programs such as the MD/MBA degree, provides fewer opportunities to enter an administrative career path. Hence, the rationale for the DDS/MBA degree is more likely to be based on the management of a single practice rather than a medical group or hospital (which is more common in MD practice). While management of a single practice is important, it is suggested that educational alternatives to the DDS/MBA degree might be more time and cost efficient, as well as, equally effective. Among the most viable alternatives are undergraduate business preparation prior to enrolling in a DDS program (e.g., double major) and specialized business seminars post-DDS training. Implications for existing DDS/MBA programs are provided.