

Re-inventing Dental Education
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Dr. Stohler described the alliance between the private sector and dentistry and stresses the importance of this. The average dentist practices for 38 years. Dentistry is ranked the #1 profession. Healthcare and IT are in the top 10 professions. Dentistry is a health sciences in which the practitioner has significant control of lifestyle; we also, as a group, have control over the future of our profession.

Dr. Stohler states that we must evaluate the return on investment of a dental education as dental school tuitions continue to rise. The ratio of debt to income is important. He also discussed the percentage of dentists practicing in rural areas. Columbia College of Dental Medicine has the fewest dentists practicing in rural areas, only 1%. 28% of CDM graduates remain in New York State, 72% leave New York State, 95% enroll in advanced dental education and 75% of graduates practice as specialists.

There may be discontinuities or crises that change the future of dentistry with potentially devastating results. We often underestimate the rate of change around us. We tend to look past solutions when planning for the future. Mobile technologies will be everywhere in 2025.

Our current health care system has problems with outcomes, costs, and equity. A newer more desirable system would have: dentists more accountable, learning from mistakes; Dentists may shave costs (not quality) and incentivize stakeholders.

There are also significant changes in the demographics of those requiring dental care. There are more elderly seeking care, more patients with chronic diseases and more complex care is needed along with more caring. Competition in healthcare is not aligned currently with value for patients and patients have little or no responsibility for their care.

Columbia School of Dental Medicine has a strong biomedical education foundation. The school is reorganizing the curriculum to support group practice in clinical experience, and utilizing emerging technologies to continue to evolve in a period of significant transformation.