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Perspective

A gentle force to complete a great education plan of oral pathology in Taiwan: In memory of Dr. Hsueh-Wan Kwan (1923–2022)



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In Taiwan, no matter during the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945) or after the World War II, the dental profession has long been dominated by male dentists.^{1,2} However, an extraordinary female dentist, Dr. Hsueh-Wan Kwan (1923–2022), appeared in the early stage of dental

development in Taiwan. In the early days after the war, Dr. Kwan was a young dentist who just graduated from the university and came to Taiwan from the Mainland China. She may be the only female dentist who received dental education in the Mainland China during the war and

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personally participated in the establishment of Taiwan's dental education system after the war and witnessed its growth from nothing to prosper. We are indeed honored to have the opportunity to write about Dr. Kwan who is well known and called as "Kwan Sir" by her colleagues and students. It was almost impossible to summarize such a monumental educational and academic career in a few words, but we tried our best to highlight the most important deeds of this legendary woman.

In this article, we collected documents related to the descriptions of Dr. Kwan's deeds as much as possible and screened the important events to make a brief chronology of Dr. Kwan's educational and academic career, as shown in Table 1. Dr. Kwan was born in 1923 in Tianjin, the Mainland China. In 1948, she completed the undergraduate dental courses and received her Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) degree from the dental school of National Central University College of Medicine. Then, she worked as a clinical

Table 1 A brief chronology of Dr. Hsueh-Wan Kwan's educational and academic career.

Time	Important events
Mainland China period	
1942	She left Tianjin and went to Chongqing where she studied dentistry in National Central University.
1943	She moved with the school to Chengdu to continue her dental studies due to the war.
1946	She moved with the school to Nanjing after the war.
1948	She graduated from the dental school of National Central University College of Medicine. Then, she worked as a clinical teaching assistant in the dental hospital attached to the College of Medicine. At the end of the year, she left Nanjing and went to Hong Kong due to the civil war.
Hong Kong period	
1949–1951	She worked as an assistant dentist in a Hong Kong government hospital.
1952	She left Hong Kong and went to Taiwan.
Taiwan period	
1953–1956	She worked as a school health dentist for the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC).
1958	Since May, she worked as a dentist in the National Taiwan University Hospital (NTUH) to become the first female dentist here. She also established and presided over the "Initial Outpatient Dental Clinic" (also well known as the current "Division of Oral Pathology and Diagnosis") of the dental department of NTUH, which was the beginning of clinical division of our department of oral pathology and diagnosis. Since August, she worked as a teaching assistant in the dental school of National Taiwan University (NTU) to become the first female dental teacher in NTU.
1961	In September, she went to Loyola University, Chicago, USA for the first time. She was the first dentist of NTUH to receive American financing to study abroad. She studied oral pathology under the guidance of master Dr. Patrick Toto and returned to Taiwan in the following year.
1963	In August, she was promoted to be a lecturer in the dental school of NTU and began to take charge of the undergraduate "Oral Pathology" course. She was the first dentist to teach this course here. Before that, this course was all taught by general pathologists.
1968	In September, she went to Loyola University, Chicago, USA for the second time. She received a Master's degree in oral biology and returned to Taiwan in the following year.
1970	In August, she was promoted to be an associate professor in the dental school of NTU.
1974	In August, she was promoted to be a professor in the dental school of NTU.
1976	She assisted her student Dr. Hey-Chi Hsu to edit and complete the first Chinese version of oral pathology textbook in Taiwan.
1978	She was elected as a Fellow of the International College of Dentists.
1984–1988	She was appointed as the chairman of the dental school of NTU and the director of dental department of NTUH to become the first female director of dental institution in Taiwan.
1989	Taiwan Academy of Oral Pathology (TAOP) was established, and she served as the first President.
1990	She took charge of the postgraduate "Oral Pathology" course and was the first teacher to teach this course in the dental school of NTU.
1992	She was one of the first batch of dentists awarded the oral pathology specialist certificate by the TAOP to become the first oral pathology specialist in Taiwan. After retirement, she still served as an adjunct professor and attending dentists to participate in teaching and dental care services for patients in NTUH.
1995	She was awarded the first honorary alumnus of Kaohsiung Medical University due to her contribution to the establishment of its dental school.
2001	She participated in and eventually contributed to the legal process of recognition of oral pathology as the second government-certified dental specialty.
2002	Including her, there were 57 oral pathologists acquiring the government-certified oral pathology specialist certificates.
2011	In April, she was newly appointed as a honorary professor of the dental school of NTU.
2015	Until the age of 92 years, she was still serving patients in the dental department of NTUH.

teaching assistant in the dental hospital attached to the College of Medicine and started her career of dental care and teaching. By coincidence of history, she escaped from the Mainland China due to the civil war and finally came to Taiwan. However, it was inevitable that she, with her strong personality, becomes a gentle force to promote the progress of dental profession in Taiwan. In the early post-war period, the dental school of National Taiwan University (NTU) had a serious shortage of teachers, and the first generation of teachers consisted mainly of male dentists who completed their dental education in Japan. With the joining of Dr. Kwan who was the only female dentist and completed her dental education in the Mainland China, there were new and good elements adding to the dental education in Taiwan.

Dr. Kwan established the “Initial Outpatient Dental Clinic” in National Taiwan University Hospital (NTUH), which opened up a new medical model of dentistry at that time and also laid the foundation for the development of dentistry towards a professional medical division in Taiwan. Although oral pathology is an important discipline for constructing the basic professional knowledge of dentists, this discipline has never been favored or emphasized by the dentists.³ Dr. Kwan volunteered to study and further to teach oral pathology. In NTUH, she first studied general pathology with master Dr. Shu Yeh, starting her life of dental services, teaching, and research of oral pathology. Then, she studied oral pathology under the guidance of master Dr. Patrick Toto and received her Master’s degree in oral biology from Loyola University, Chicago, USA in 1986. In Taiwan, the undergraduate oral pathology course was not taught by dentists until 1963. Dr. Kwan was distinctly honored to be the first teacher of undergraduate oral pathology course in the role of a dentist in Taiwan. As an oral pathology teacher, she mentored many of her students to find their way in the field of dentistry. Especially before Taiwan’s medical specialty system was implemented in 1988, dentists could receive general pathology training in the hospitals to become general pathologists. Some of her students found this new career direction and later became general pathologists. Most of us share the same oral pathology memory as her. We consider her as a teachers’ teacher or the “World First Kwan” of oral pathology.

In the early days of NTU, this modest professor did not have laboratory equipment or slides to teach undergraduate dental students. However, due to her great enthusiasm in teaching, she borrowed a microscope from the Department of General Pathology and made thousands of teaching slides by collecting tissue and organ specimens and conducting experiments on these specimens with limited technical resources. Her great interest in teaching contributed to establish a local oral pathology teaching material system in NTU. She also assisted her student Dr. Hey-Chi Hsu to edit and complete the first Chinese version of oral pathology textbook in Taiwan in 1976. She had played an important role in teaching the oral pathology course for other dental departments in the universities in Taiwan, for this reason she was awarded the honorary alumnus of Kaohsiung Medical University. Moreover, the postgraduate oral pathology course was not available in Taiwan until 1990. Dr. Kwan held the distinct honor of being the first postgraduate teacher of oral pathology in Taiwan,

by starting the first postgraduate oral pathology course in the dental school of NTU in 1990. After 34 years of dedication in NTU and NTUH, she retired but continued to participate in teaching of oral pathology course in the dental school of NTU and dental care services in the dental department of NTUH until the age of 92 years in 2015. She was appointed as a honorary professor of the dental school of NTU in 2011. From 1948 when she graduated from the dental school to 2015 when she was still serving patients at an advanced age, her life of dental care for patients and teaching was astonishingly close to 70 years. Furthermore, Dr. Kwan also has another unique honor of being the first dentist receiving American financing to study abroad to become the first expert in oral pathology in Taiwan. She established Taiwan Academy of Oral Pathology (TAOP) and became the first President. She actively participated in the TAOP national and international activities and eventually contributed to the legal process of recognition of oral pathology as the second government-certified dental specialty.

Dr. Kwan is undoubtedly one of the most famous oral pathologists and dental educators in Taiwan. Many of us will be forever grateful to Dr. Kwan for her encouragement and support in our dentists’ careers. In recent decades, the career of dentists has been favored by our social value system due to the characteristics of high income and high quality of life in this profession. Nevertheless, it is even more worthy of mention that Dr. Kwan is devoted to oral pathology but not to other dental specialties that guarantee a high income.^{4,5} Her humility and achievements are indeed not only an inspiration but also a role model for our younger generation of dentists.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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None.

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