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## Correspondence

# The role of dentists in Taiwan medical dedication award



## KEYWORDS

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Today, when utilitarianism prevails, there are still some people with ideals in society, who do not seek to be famous in the world, but serve and contribute silently in every corner of the grassroots. A Welfare Foundation of Taiwan is holding the selection event to affirm and reward the tireless medical staff, nurses and health administrators who have dedicated themselves to the medical field and to praise their lofty spirit and mind to save the world and save the people. It is expected to arouse the goodwill and conscience of the medical profession, and encourage compassionate human care.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in recent decades, some dentists have also been recognized and honored for the deeds of kindness in helping patients through their dental profession. In this article, we searched and analyzed the role of dentists in Taiwan medical dedication award (MDA).

In this analysis, the introduction of the MDA winners published by the organizer (Welfare Foundation) was used to filter winners related to dentists and groups involving oral care from 1991 to 2022. During this 32-year period, there were 287 individual award winners and 28 group award winners. Among them, 14 (4.88%) individual MDA winners are dentists, and 5 (17.86%) group MDA winners are groups involving oral care. The characteristics of MDA winners related to dentists and groups involving oral care are shown in Table 1. The first MDA was processed in 1991. The first dentist of the individual MDA was awarded in 2002, while the first dental service group of the group MDA was

awarded in 1998, and its members also received the individual MDA later. Of the 14 dentists of the individual MDA, there were 12 males and 2 females. Their ages ranged from 49 to 76 years old when they won the individual MDA, with an average age of 60.5 years old. The dental school with the largest number of graduates who won the MDA was the Chung Shan Medical University (CSMU,  $n = 6$ ), followed by the Taipei Medical University (TMU,  $n = 4$ ) and the National Taiwan University (NTU,  $n = 2$ ). According to practice place, most of them served in the northern region ( $n = 4$ ), followed by the southern ( $n = 3$ ), eastern ( $n = 3$ ) and central ( $n = 2$ ) regions, and outlying islands ( $n = 2$ ). Most of them served in the local institutions ( $n = 10$ ), while the others served in the hospitals ( $n = 4$ ). Most of them were dental specialists ( $n = 9$ ) with 1–2 specialist certificates, while the others were general dentists ( $n = 5$ ). The specialist certificates that most of the MDA winners possessed were special needs dentistry (SND,  $n = 6$ ), followed by family dentistry (FD,  $n = 3$ ) and oral and maxillofacial surgery (OS,  $n = 2$ ). For their deeds, the main contribution was the dental care for people of special needs ( $n = 6$ ) and residents in the remote regions of Taiwan, including remote mountainous residents ( $n = 4$ ) and outlying island residents ( $n = 2$ ), followed by the oral cancer prevention and treatment ( $n = 1$ ) and the dental care for prison inmates ( $n = 1$ ). In addition to the content of above contributions, other contributions also included the establishment of the dental clinic for the disabled, the dental care abroad, and the dental care for AIDS patients who were prison inmates. Furthermore, of the 5 winners of the group MDA, there were one informal organization, two public interest groups, and two institution-affiliated medical service teams. Two groups were mainly composed of dentists who provided dental care for remote mountainous residents and people of special needs, while the other 3 groups were composed of various professionals who provided medical care including dentistry-related care for people. Their importance lies in the fact that they are pioneers and long-term practitioners in the field for dental and medical cares for remote region residents,

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**Table 1** Characteristics of medical dedication award (MDA) winners related to dentists and groups involving oral care acquired from the introduction of previous winners by the organizer (Welfare Foundation).

Winner	Year	Gender	Age	The individual MDA						
				Graduated school*	Practice place	Practice region	Institution	Specialist certificate**	Main contribution	Other contribution
1	2002	Male	66	NTU	Taipei City	Northern	Medical center	OS	Oral cancer prevention and treatment	Establishment of the dental clinic for the disabled
2	2010	Male	55	TMU	New Taipei City	Northern	Dental clinic	SND	Dental care for people of special needs	Dental care of remote region residents
3	2011	Male	49	CSMU	Penghu County	Outlying islands	Dental clinic		Dental care for outlying island residents	Dental care for people of special needs and dental care abroad
4	2012	Male	56	CSMU	Taitung County	Eastern	Township health center		Dental care of remote region residents	Dental care for outlying island residents and dental care abroad
5	2014	Male	59	TMU	Hualien County	Eastern	Dental clinic	OS, SND	Dental care of remote region residents	Dental care for people of special needs
6	2015	Female	59	Foreign school	Pingtung County	Southern	Regional hospital	FD, SND	Dental care for people of special needs	Dental care of remote region residents
7	2016	Female	60	KMU	Changhua County	Central	Dental clinic	Anesthesiology	Dental care for people of special needs	Dental care for prison inmates
8	2016	Male	76	CSMU	Penghu County	Outlying islands	Dental clinic		Dental care for outlying island residents	Dental care for people of special needs and dental care abroad
9	2017	Male	56	CSMU	Taichung City	Central	Dental clinic	Pedo, SND	Dental care for people of special needs	Dental care of remote region residents
10	2019	Male	50	CSMU	Taoyuan City	Northern	Dental clinic	FD, SND	Dental care for people of special needs	Dental care of remote region residents and dental care abroad
11	2020	Male	59	TMU	Taipei City	Northern	Dental clinic	FD, SND	Dental care for people of special needs	

12	2021	Male	70	CSMU	Pingtung County	Southern	Dental clinic		Dental care for prison inmates	Dental care for AIDS patients who were prison inmates
13	2022	Male	66	NTU	Taitung County	Eastern	District hospital	Ortho	Dental care of remote region residents	
14	2022	Male	66	TMU	Pingtung County	Southern	Regional hospital		Dental care of remote region residents	Dental care for prison inmates

The group MDA

Winner	Year	Group attribute	Members	Service content	Importance
1	1998	Informal organization	Mainly dentists	Dental care for remote mountainous residents	The pioneer in the medical community spontaneously established a medical service group for remote region residents.
2	2006	Public interest association	Various medical personnel including dentists	Medical care (including dentistry) for remote mountainous residents	The group is synonymous with free clinics both at home and abroad, and outlines a beautiful vision for the mobile hospital.
3	2013	Public interest foundation	Various social work professionals and medical personnel	Rehabilitation care for patients with facial injuries (including oral cancer or head/neck cancer patients)	The first group extends rehabilitation care to the community, assisting burns and facial damage patients with all-round care after the acute stage, including the same care for oral cancer or head/neck cancer patients.
4	2018	Hospital mountain medical service team	Various medical personnel	Medical care (including oral cancer screening) for remote mountainous residents	The group has been stationed in the mountainous areas for a long time, and has transformed from a small mountain clinic to a mountain hospital.
5	2020	Dental Association medical service team	Mainly dentists	Dental care for remote mountainous residents and people of special needs	The group promotes medical stations with modern equipment in the townships without dentists to prevent people from giving up dental care due to difficulties in seeking dental treatment.

The remote region residents are mainly those living in remote mountainous areas.

\* This is according to the undergraduate dental schools that the MDA winners graduated from, and the abbreviations of various dental schools are shown as follows: National Taiwan University (NTU), Taipei Medical University (TMU), Chung Shan Medical University (CSMU), and Kaohsiung Medical University (KMU).

\*\* The abbreviations of various dental specialties and their legal approval time are shown as follows: oral and maxillofacial surgery (OS, 1999), orthodontics (Ortho, 2009), pediatric dentistry (Pedo, 2019), family dentistry (FD, 2021), and special needs dentistry (SND, 2022). Therefore, it was after the MDA that the winners obtained the specialist certificates of pediatric dentistry, family dentistry or special needs dentistry.

disadvantaged groups of patients, and those patients with special needs.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first analysis of the role of dentists in Taiwan MDA. Although Taiwan has escaped from the early stage of lacking medical resources, the uneven distribution of medical resources has always been a problem that is difficult to improve.<sup>2,3</sup> Therefore, health equality for all people has always been a serious issue that must be faced. Our results showed that the focus of the MDA has gradually expanded from life-saving medical care for residents in remote areas to health care for improving the quality of life of special groups of people. Therefore, dentists are gradually showing their prominence in this award, not only because they contribute to medical care of remote region residents, but also because they contribute to the improvement of health equality and improve the quality of life of patients through oral care. In addition to medical care for people of special needs and remote region residents, the rights of health of vulnerable groups in urban areas (especially children or people from economically disadvantaged families) may be a direction that needs to pay attention in the future. Due to the characteristics of high income and good quality of life, the career of dentists has been favored by the social value system.<sup>4</sup> However, our dental schools rarely provide medical humanities courses for the dental students.<sup>5</sup> We consider that these senior dentists who have acquired the MDA are good models, and their deeds are worthy of being compiled into the textbooks of medical ethics courses. Before dental students become dentists, knowing the deeds of exemplary dentists may help to improve their sentiments of social care.

## Declaration of competing interest

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

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Feng-Chou Cheng<sup>†</sup>

Chia-Te Dental Clinic, New Taipei City, Taiwan  
School of Life Science, National Taiwan Normal University,  
Taipei, Taiwan  
Science Education Center, National Taiwan Normal  
University, Taipei, Taiwan

Ling-Hsia Wang<sup>†</sup>

Center for the Literature and Art, Hsin Sheng Junior  
College of Medical Care and Management, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Yin-Lin Wang\*\*

Department of Dentistry, National Taiwan University  
Hospital, College of Medicine, National Taiwan University,  
Taipei, Taiwan  
Graduate Institute of Clinical Dentistry, School of  
Dentistry, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Chun-Pin Chiang\*

Department of Dentistry, National Taiwan University  
Hospital, College of Medicine, National Taiwan University,  
Taipei, Taiwan  
Graduate Institute of Clinical Dentistry, School of  
Dentistry, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan  
Graduate Institute of Oral Biology, School of Dentistry,  
National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan  
Department of Dentistry, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital,  
Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, Hualien, Taiwan

\*\*Corresponding author. Department of Dentistry, National  
Taiwan University Hospital, College of Medicine, National  
Taiwan University, No. 1, Chang-Te Street, Taipei, 10048,  
Taiwan.  
E-mail address: [wil1019@ntu.edu.tw](mailto:wil1019@ntu.edu.tw) (Y.-L. Wang)

\*Corresponding author. Department of Dentistry, Hualien  
Tzu Chi Hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, No.  
707, Section 3, Chung-Yang Road, Hualien, 970, Taiwan.  
E-mail address: [cpchiang@ntu.edu.tw](mailto:cpchiang@ntu.edu.tw) (C.-P. Chiang)

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<sup>†</sup> These two authors contributed equally to this work.