



## The Modern Specialty of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

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Modern day Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMS) is truly a bridge between the medical and dental professions. This is logical since the core remit of the specialty is the comprehensive surgical care of diseases and disorders of the mouth, jaws and associated structures. In the past, maxillofacial surgery was a medical specialty while oral surgery was a dental specialty. However, with the many technological advances and developments, and the ever present ambitious nature of practitioners, the two overlapping specialties emerged to become the currently prevalent specialty of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. This occurred mostly through the initial implementation of dual qualifications in medicine and dentistry, followed by specialty training in OMS. This dual training requirement is currently in force in Europe and Australia, but such a requirement is not in place in Asia or Latin America while North America has it as an option for those wishing to pursue sub-specialisation in Head and Neck Oncology and Craniofacial surgery. Training in OMS therefore, depending on where in the world one is, begins after dentistry, after medicine, or after both qualifications. The curriculum which is followed by various countries in their training programmes varies in length, depth and quality leading to significant differences in professional standards worldwide.

The International Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (IAOMS) is an umbrella organisation that gathers together over 5000 individual members and 74 national associations (HK being one) in a representation system whereby each affiliated nation nominates one councillor to the governing council of the association. The association functions through an Executive Committee and a Board of Directors, and has an Education Committee, a Research Committee, and an educational Foundation.

Through its education committee, the association has promulgated the International Guidelines on Education and Training in OMS in an effort to assist in harmonising the training standards of OMS around the world. More and more countries are reaching compatibility with the international guidelines. Current efforts are directed at evaluating a possible role for IAOMS in international accreditation or certification. The IAOMS Education Committee sets up educational courses to be given by volunteer teachers free of charge in various parts of the developing world and funded by the IAOMS Foundation. Courses have taken place in Thailand, Indonesia, Peru, Paraguay and Dar el Salaam with the intent of exposing trainees from developing countries to current knowledge and thought and developments in the specialty.

The IAOMS Research Committee is engaged in promoting research within the specialty and has developed various research interest groups (RIG's) to support members across world regions. There are also special interest groups (SIG's) focused on clinical subspecialties with a newly created international training fellowship scheme.

The association further produces a journal which is ranked at the top of the list of journals in the discipline and awards the international conference biennially to a major city in the world. The upcoming 19th International Conference will take place in Shanghai in May 2009 and the Hong Kong Association of OMS is a major player in the organisation of the conference. Every member of the HKAOMS is also a member of the IAOMS thus contributing to the esprit de corps of our specialty worldwide. HKAOMS is rightly proud of its ongoing contribution to the specialty worldwide.