

Oral Medicine in Korea, Can We Become a Global Leader?

Hong-Seop Kho
Editor-in-Chief of JOMP

Department of Oral Medicine and Oral Diagnosis, School of Dentistry, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea

The scope of Oral Medicine (OM) encompasses all medicinal aspects of dentistry through the integration of medicine and dentistry. However, there is a large variation in the postgraduate curriculum and practices among different countries.^{1,2)} This disparity may reflect the broad and unlimited scope of OM, but such distinctions may also cause difficulties in academic and personnel flow and the lack of international standard hinders comparison among countries.

The early stages of OM in Korea had started with oral diagnosis, oral mucosal diseases, and forensic odontology. Through academic evolution, saliva and salivary gland diseases, taste disorders, and oral malodor became to be included. Most importantly, OM in Korea has gained domestic leadership in the field of temporomandibular disorders (TMD) and chronic orofacial pain (OFP), and obstructive sleep apnea. The OM's open-minded character and insight to new horizons beyond structure-oriented restoration and surgery made such achievements possible. We respect the academic endeavor of our senior fellows and the struggle and competition they went through to establish sound grounds in the field of TMD and OFP. We also recognize and strongly believe that these fields should be appreciated and developed by the eyes of medicine not the restoration and surgery in nature. We know that OM in many countries already embrace the branch of OFP. The first word in the website of The American Academy of Oral Medicine (AAOM) is temporomandibular joint (TMJ).³⁾ One of the main topics of the 5th World Workshop of Oral Medicine (WWOM) in London held in 2010 was 'persistent orofacial muscle pain'.⁴⁾ Many dental schools in the USA have departments named 'OM

and OFP'. Considering the fact that OM and OFP is rapidly merging in academic and administrative aspects, we believe that OM in Korea has been and is on the right track. All eleven dental schools in Korea have OM departments with the same postgraduate curriculums and government-based specialty program. Such unity and consistency of OM in Korea sets a good model for other countries.

Can OM in Korea which has had excellent academic insight up to now become a global leader in the future? What should we do to make it a reality not dream? First, we must consider the contributions we should make to public and global health sciences. OM should apply knowledge from rapidly growing basic sciences to its clinical and academic work. Neuroscience and immunology which are the most rapidly growing and changing fields of studies become our core knowledge background. At the same time, we cannot be excluded from digital and information technology. This means that we should always be prepared to confront with consistent challenge to become an academic leader. We should also become an active member of health sciences which have been urged to feed the nation in the way engineering had so many years ago.

The *Journal of Oral Medicine and Pain* (JOMP) has declared open access to public since December 30, 2014 (<http://www.journalomp.org>). The knowledge we have discovered and reported in JOMP exists not only for us, but also for the public. We hope JOMP will provide advanced knowledge as well as insight in the scope of OM in Korea. The integrative characteristic of OM will be more focused at this moment when the boundaries between academic fields are

disappearing. Open access of JOMP is more meaningful at this era when the boundaries between countries are vanishing thanks to the Internet. Let's strengthen the competency of each one of ourselves and OM in Korea for the public. Let more public open access JOMP.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

REFERENCES

1. Rogers H, Sollecito TP, Felix DH, et al. An international survey in postgraduate training in Oral Medicine. *Oral Dis* 2011;17(Suppl 1):95-98.
2. Stoopler ET, Shirlaw P, Arvind M, et al. An international survey of oral medicine practice: proceedings from the 5th World Workshop in Oral Medicine. *Oral Dis* 2011;17(Suppl 1):99-104.
3. The American Academy of Oral Medicine (AAOM). Edmonds (WA): AAOM [cited 2015 Jan 30]. Available from: <http://www.aaom.com>.
4. Benoliel R, Svensson P, Heir GM, et al. Persistent orofacial muscle pain. *Oral Dis* 2011;17(Suppl 1):23-41.