

Resident Feature – Becoming a Teacher in the Specialty I Love: Orthodontic Residency and a Future in Academia

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Everyone in the world dreams of making a positive change, whether it is big or small, personal or general. According to your dream, you create your plans and turn your aspiration into reality. My own dream is to make a change in others' lives through teaching and research. I was always interested in knowledge transfer and development. Thus, after I completed my dental education, I decided to go on and pursue post-graduate studies.

I completed my undergraduate and dental education at Kuwait University, Faculty of Dentistry in 2015. The journey of dental education was very interesting and challenging due to the highly advanced and competitive nature of the dental program in Kuwait. Despite this, the setting of the school, the clinic and the small size of the class made it easy for me to have direct contact with the professors during school time. I spent a lot of time talking to my orthodontic professors who graduated from advanced education programs in the States about their experience in academia. I came to realize early on that I would like to pursue such a path as I enjoyed my time during study groups, case presentations and research projects. It felt satisfying to transfer knowledge and see that aha moment in someone else's eyes. An aha moment I helped to create.

To those who don't know Kuwait, it's a country tiny in size and rich in values that resides in the Middle East. The dental program at Kuwait University is combined with the undergraduate program, and it's a total of seven years. There is no specialized postgraduate orthodontic program in all of Kuwait. I am currently funded by Kuwait Government on a scholarship to complete my Orthodontic Residency Program and Doctorate of Medical Sciences (DMSc) Degree at Harvard. Thus, it makes it one of my crucial goals to help establish grounds to start the first orthodontic residency program in Kuwait. I want to give back to everyone who invested their time and efforts in teaching me during dental school and to my country that currently supports me to get the best education and training.

Since dentistry and orthodontics are relatively young professions when compared to medicine, I knew that the opportunities were wide open and the chances of change and development many. During dental school, I did my research project in orthodontics and presented it in the school poster day and the local Hatton's Competition—an IADR research competition for dental students. The research project was selected as a winner and I was funded to attend the annual IADR meeting, which happened in Boston, MA, in 2015. As I met new people, had great discussions and shared my dinner table with a JDR editorial board member, my vision got clearer of what path I wanted to pursue—research and academia.

After my visit to Boston and due to all the previously mentioned reasons, I applied specifically to orthodontic residency programs that give a special focus to research and academia. After the famous roller coaster of applications and interviews, I was honored to be accepted at Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Orthodontics (Doctorate of Medical Sciences) residency program. The Orthodontic advanced education program at Harvard is very unique as it designates an entire year of my residency to research and gives me the freedom of choosing between multiple types of research, as well as sites to conduct the research. Harvard has many affiliations with different schools and hospitals, thus you will gain plenty of research experience. I am currently in my first year of the program, focusing on my research that involves the use of new technology in orthodontic diagnosis.

My short experience in Boston thus far has been really pleasant and fulfilling. The diversity that the city offers is amazing; people come from all around the world to be part of a unique learning experience. The amount of dental conferences, extra-curricular activities, forums and social events keeps you busy during weekends. I am really grateful to be studying at Harvard School of Dental Medicine and look forward to an exciting future in orthodontics and academia! ▶