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Question: What is the difference between DMD and DDS?

Answer: Nothing

Many of you have noticed that Dr. Curtis L. Barmby is a D.D.S. and Dr. Gail E. Frick is a D.M.D. and have wondered what the difference is. Here, in a very condensed form, is the story:

Dental schools in the United States award two different degrees to graduating dentists: Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) and Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD). Despite the difference in names, DMD and DDS mean essentially the same thing, and one is not superior or inferior to the other. DDS was the original degree, but this changed 1867 when Harvard University opened their School of Dental Medicine. Harvard only prints their diplomas in Latin. If Doctor of Dental Surgery was translated into Latin it would read Chirurgae Dentium Doctoris or C.D.D. Harvard thought that too many people would be confused by C.D.D. so they decided to change the name to Dentariae Medicinae Doctor or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD).

There are currently 58 dental schools in the United States including one school in Puerto Rico). Of these schools, 36 give DDS degrees and 22 give DMD degrees. The American Dental Association is aware of the public confusion and has made numerous suggestions on how to address it including:

1. Eliminate the DMD degree,
2. Eliminate the DDS degree, OR,
3. Eliminate both DMD and DDS.

The American Dental Association would then create a new degree that all dental schools would agree to use. Thus far, there has been no solution and it does not look like there will be one anytime soon.

Sorry for the confusion!