

Orofacial Medicine

*A formally recognised dental specialty in
Sweden since June 1, 2018*



SOM • SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF OROFACIAL MEDICINE

The history of orofacial medicine in Sweden

There is a long tradition of expertise within the field of oral medicine and hospital dentistry/special needs dentistry in Sweden, although neither of them, until recently, have been recognised specialties. In 1976, the Swedish Association for Hospital Dentistry (in Swedish: *Svensk Sjukhustandläkarförening - SSTF*) was founded, and later, in 1990, the Swedish Society for Oral Medicine (in Swedish: *Svenska Oralmedicinska Sällskapet - SOMS*) was established. Both organisations have been strongly committed to research and development in their respective fields. In 2011, the two organisations merged to form the Swedish Association of Orofacial Medicine (in Swedish: *Svensk förening för Orofacial Medicin - SOM*). Subsequently, an intensive period followed, building on earlier efforts, to convey to the authorities the need for a formally recognised specialty within the field, in order to promote clinical development, patient safety and scientific progress.

In December 2017, The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare decided that orofacial medicine would become a formally recognised specialty, as from 1st June, 2018.

A national three-year pilot training program in orofacial medicine at a specialist level for dentists was introduced already in 2005. To date, 15 dentists have completed the program and 15 more are in training. These will be among the first to receive a specialist degree.

Today, there are nine recognised dental specialties in Sweden: endodontology, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orofacial medicine, orthodontics, periodontology, pedodontics, prosthodontics, and stomatognathic physiology.

The orofacial medicine specialty

Orofacial medicine is a broad specialty in Swedish dental care, combining oral medicine and hospital dentistry/special needs dentistry for adults. It includes prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disorders in the oral cavity and surrounding tissues, with a focus on oral mucosal conditions and their association and interactions with systemic diseases and medical treatments, especially in medically compromised patients. It also includes the special considerations and treatment difficulties associated with dental care at a specialist level in patients with geriatric conditions and developmental, cognitive and psychiatric disorders. Both inpatients and outpatients are treated within the specialty.

To provide comprehensive care that meets the complex individual needs of patients with serious diseases or disabilities, a specialist in orofacial medicine requires a broad medical and dental knowledge in order to integrate the odontological and medical aspects of patients' oral problems and to interact with medical experts.

Specialist training programme

The three-year training programme for dentists to reach a specialist level in orofacial medicine includes extensive clinical training as well as courses in: internal medicine, haematology, oncology, infectious diseases, ear-, nose- and throat diseases, rheumatology, neurology, pharmacology, anaesthesia and sedation, geriatrics, psychology and psychiatry, cognitive disorders, laboratory medicine, oral mucosal diseases, oral radiology, oral motor dysfunctions, community dentistry, ethics, and research methodology.

Swedish Association of Orofacial Medicine

Members of the Swedish Association of Orofacial Medicine (SOM) are dentists in Sweden with a special interest within the field of orofacial medicine. Currently the association has around 250 members. It focuses on promoting quality improvements, advancement of care, education, training and research within the field, as well as promoting cooperation with other fields of health care.

SOM members may enter a programme for further in-depth training to receive a Swedish diploma/certificate (extended examination) in oral medicine, beyond the specialist exam. Such diploma programmes could also be introduced, in the future, in a number of other subareas of orofacial medicine, such as dental care for geriatric patients, psychiatric patients and patients with cognitive disorders.

The association holds web-seminars, yearly meetings and other educational activities. Over the years, many members have contributed to national and international scientific congresses.

It is a strong belief of the association that the recent recognition of orofacial medicine as a formal specialty will guarantee sustainability and further development of patient care and research within this important area.

There are many challenges ahead for us as an association, and we consider ourselves well prepared to meet them.



“Navigare necesse est”

For more information about the association, please visit www.som.nu