

Editorial

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Dental Hygiene Internationally: The 19th International Symposium on Dental Hygiene

The International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) is an international, non-governmental, non-profit organization, free from any political, racial or religious ties. It unites dental hygiene associations from around the world in their common cause of promoting dental health. The IFDH was comprised of 23 members prior to the meeting: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. We welcomed 3 new members in Cape Town: Nepal, Spain and Russia.

The 19th International Symposium on Dental Hygiene (ISDH) was held August 14 to 17, 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa. The Symposium was co-hosted by the IFDH and the Oral Hygienists' Association of South Africa (OHASA). We celebrated 100 years of dental hygiene, and explored the role of dental hygienists as primary health care providers in total health care. The Scientific Program theme and focus was about how oral health is central to our daily life and well-being, and exerts a fundamental influence on the quality of life for every individual. Both community experience and research evidence support that oral health is more than just the absence of disease or loss of function. People are increasingly aware that the optimal functioning of the oral-facial structures is important in their comfort and well-being and for preserving their self-esteem. Individuals and communities have to be educated regarding the causes of oral diseases and how they can be involved in preventing or eliminating such diseases. They can be informed through outreach, health education and health promotion.

The World Dental Hygienist Award 2013 winners were honored at the meeting. The generous support of SUNSTAR has provided the foundation for the prestigious World Dental Hygienist Award. Congratulations to the 2013 recipients:

- Research category - Ms D.E. Slot, "The Effect of 1% Chlorhexidine Gel and 0.12% Dentifrice

Gel on Plaque Accumulation: A Three Day Non-Brushing Model"

- Project category - Mr M. Rui Araújo, "An Inclusive Public Dental Health Project in Portugal"
- Student Research category - Mr T. Blom, "The Effect of Mouth Rinses on Oral Malodour: A Systematic Review"

All recipients presented their papers during the 2013 International Symposium on Dental Hygiene.

As I traveled the world the last 3 years as the 2010 to 2013 President of the IFDH, I realized that there is no global standard for dental hygiene education. As countries begin to recognize dental hygiene as a profession, we see the number of years of education required increasing. The Netherlands is the highest with a 4 year minimum requirement. Patricia Johnson conducted an international longitudinal study that examines trends and changes in dental hygiene.¹ Over the 19 year period, there was a noticeable increase in supply accompanied by improved dental hygienist-to-population and to-dentist ratios, continuing high workforce participation rates, shift to and increase in the number of baccalaureate-level education programs, and increase in scope of practice and professional autonomy including, for many countries, a decline in mandatory work supervision and slight increase in independent practice.¹

By far the greatest increase in the number of dental hygienists was observed in Italy, a notable 2,207.7% over the 18 year period between 1987 to 2005.¹ Additional information on dental hygiene in Italy was presented to the Belgian Society of Periodontology.² Italy also has a national research association/society called the Italian Society of Oral Hygiene Sciences (La Società Italiana di Scienze dell'Igiene Orale (SISIO)). SISIO objectives are to accelerate the development of oral hygiene research, create a research infrastructure to serve the profession and build a solid scientific basis for the clinical practice of oral hygiene. They strive for the cultural and scientific growth of dental hygiene. The

SISIO slogan is: Learn about the science of oral hygiene and how to be protagonists (translated loosely to mean learn to be proactive and be major players in the field of prevention). SISIO will not replace the professional associations, like Associazione Igienisti Dentali Italiani (AIDI), but will operate on a purely scientific and cultural basis, in synergy and harmony with the professional organizations.

In Europe, we see The Bologna Process. The Bologna Process launched the European Higher Education Area in 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures.³ The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 put in motion a series of reforms needed to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for

Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. Reform was needed then and reform is still needed today if Europe is to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world. For more specifically on dental hygiene education in Europe, see the article by Luciak-Donsberger and Eaton.⁴

The Swiss Dental Hygienists will, for the first time, welcome the IFDH and dental hygienists from around the world for the 2016 ISDH. Held at Basel Switzerland, the meeting will be held June 23 to 25, 2016, and the theme for the meeting is: Dental Hygiene – New Challenges. For more information, visit the website.⁵ I hope to see you all there!

Sincerely,
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References

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