

## Introduction to the Symposium

### *Caries risk: individual and population perspectives*

In developed countries, the reduction of dental caries experience in childhood for the majority has led to the development and recognition of a significant minority of high-caries-risk communities who have failed to benefit from prevention and who are often excluded from regular use of health care (1). The communities are in neighbourhoods of low socioeconomic status, minority ethnic groups, and their general health and living conditions are poor. In developing countries, as development increases, so does childhood caries experience. Internationally, there is a growing emphasis on identifying high-risk groups, to commence prevention from a young age (2). However, on a population basis, long-term modification of individual risks and unhealthy behaviours requires societal change. With the growing recognition of behavioural, cultural and biological impacts on health, it is evident that a single approach to prevention is unlikely to be effective.

A symposium organized by the Cariology Group of the International Association for Dental Research (IADR) aimed to initiate debate by bringing together experts in the field from a range of disciplines and this publication provides the scientific papers presented. The opening paper by Professor Brian Burt provides an exposition of the concept of risk and how that should impact on developing an evidence-based approach to prevention. Professor David Beighton's paper is an appreciation of the complexity of the microflora

in people with caries that challenges the orthodoxy that a single genus can be targeted for intervention. Professor Douglas Bratthall describes a new approach toward identifying persons at most risk in the community. An exposition of the methodologies available to clinicians to enhance caries risk assessment is presented by Dr Sophia Traneus and colleagues. Finally, an appreciation of sociobehavioural risk factors is essential and Professor Poul Erik Petersen describes how these are expressed in different countries and cultures.

The symposium was organized by Professor Cynthia Pine and chaired by Professor Birgit Angmar-Mansson with co-chair Professor Douglas Bratthall who provided the opening to the discussion. The symposium was sponsored by the Cariology Group of the International Association for Dental Research (IADR).

## References

1. Harris R, Nicoll AD, Adair PM, Pine CM. Risk factors for dental caries in young children: a systematic review of the literature. *Community Dent Health* 2004;21:71–85.
2. Pine CM, Adair PM, Nicoll AD, Burnside G, Petersen PE, Beighton D, et al. International comparisons of health inequalities in childhood dental caries. *Community Dent Health* 2004;21:121–30.

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