

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the first edition of the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene* (IJDH) for 2006. During 2005 our Editorial team presented a diverse range of articles that encompass the very essence of our profession. Each edition has provided relevant research, the findings of which can be applied to our daily practice. Evidence-based dentistry is now being taught universally and quality journals such as the IJDH is an invaluable resource to all dental hygiene training facilities and practicing dental hygienists globally.

Professional development is the ethical responsibility of all dental professionals if they are to provide best practice to their patients. Many opportunities to achieve this are provided by professional associations on a local, national and international level through conferences, courses and publications.

The International Federation of Dental Hygiene (IFDH) 'links dental hygiene worldwide' and provides opportunities for professional development through the IJDH as well as the International Symposium on Dental Hygiene which is held every 3 years, the next scheduled for July 2007 in Toronto, Canada.

As education is an important element in our continued growth as a dental professional, it is also an important element in the growth and development of patients' awareness of the importance and benefits of good oral health. Behaviour change and compliance is more likely to occur if the patient takes responsibility for their own oral health and appreciates the benefits to total health.

In this issue I was particularly interested to read the article 'Factors behind change in knowledge after a mass media campaign targeting periodontitis'. The study analysed the change in knowledge of 50–75-year-old people before and after a mass media campaign on periodontitis. Education, age, social status, ethnicity, utilization of dental services and frequency of attendance, oral health status and the importance of general health in relation to oral health were analysed.

Findings showed that the level of education was significant in the increase of knowledge both before and after the campaign as was regular care by dental professionals plus the patient's perception of the importance of oral health. It concluded that as a health promotion strategy mass media campaigns might increase knowledge about periodontitis.

Use of the media can be very powerful and this article encourages us to think more laterally when planning education campaigns to the community. Dental corporations have been

using the electronic and print media for decades to promote their products and I can see immense potential for the dental profession to use this medium as a means of health promotion for the community at large.

The IFDH has embraced this concept with the promotion of International Dental Hygiene Day, which is held in October every year. Our aim is to raise awareness of the importance of good oral health and the role of the dental professional in achieving this. Press releases and articles are circulated to radio and television stations, newspapers and magazines and community events are organized. This is in line with our goal 'Total health through oral health'.

If you establish good oral health habits at a young age there is every likelihood they will be carried through life. In the article 'Research defines public dental health promotion in youth' our colleagues in Holland have been able to develop a research tool to enable them to identify groups of children who have poor oral health in particular schools. This enables them to implement more effective and focused oral health promotion to those in most need.

Information protocols were established to ensure uniform dissemination of information and sessions were provided to groups of parents and children, individually by dentists and dental hygienists and to parents of children from ages 0 to 4. From the data that were collected, risk groups were identified and targeted with a specific oral health education campaign that involved schools, teachers, oral health workers and parents. In conclusion, the article states that a combined approach of group education and individual-based information is desirable. The advantage of individual instruction is that the dental professional can provide recommendations that are specific to the individuals needs. This finding was common to both articles.

I hope you enjoy the great selection of articles in this edition.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Marjolijn Hovius and her team for a journal of such high excellence, to the contributors for their quality articles and to you the subscribers for your support.

Best wishes and peace and happiness in 2006.

Sue Aldenhoven

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