

Dear friends and colleagues

Welcome to the first issue of the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene* for 2007. The IFDH would like to extend best wishes to all our international colleagues for a productive and successful year and sincerely hope that we will meet you at the 17th International Symposium on Dental Hygiene to be held in Toronto, Canada in July this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Blackwell Munksgaard for their continued collaboration and support in the production of the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene* and their commitment to the growth and development of the profession of dental hygiene on a global level.

As we have become accustomed to expect from the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene*, this issue brings us a variety of very interesting and relevant articles that can be adapted to our clinical practice as well as enhancing our lifelong commitment to professional development. Dental hygienists work in a variety of settings and assume responsibility for many aspects of clinical practice that are either directly hands on or in a supervisory capacity. The responsibility for the daily maintenance of dental equipment in the hygiene operatory or the supervision of this activity falls within the duties of the clinical dental hygienist and the article 'The presence of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in the dental unit water line systems of teaching clinics' highlights this. Vigilance in infection control is essential to best practice and articles such as this highlight the responsibility of all dental professionals to practice stringent procedures at all times and not to accept breaches of any kind.

'Sonic and ultrasonic scalers in periodontal treatment: a review' discusses the differences between these two types of electronic scaling devices as well as their advantages and disadvantages when used in periodontal treatment care. The paper comprehensively covers mode of action, technique, indications and contraindications and cautions against irreversible damage if the correct technique is not used. Modern techniques and the availability of specialized finer tips are discussed as well as the trend away from hand debridement to a combination of both or just ultrasonic alone.

I found the article 'A photographic method to measure the colour characteristics of healthy gingiva' of great interest. Today, we have a plethora of new technology available to us and this method of recording the colour of the gingivae would

be a valuable tool for use in teaching institutions as well as being incorporated in the clinical examination process, as part of recording clinical findings. It has the potential to be applied to many aspects of recording clinical findings as well as being a reliable and consistent tool that is objective and scientific rather than subjective.

Finally, I would like to discuss the article 'An argument for dental hygiene to develop as a discipline'. I was pleased to read that the authors thought it timely to raise this issue again and to bring this discussion into the global arena. When we consider how far the profession of dental hygiene has progressed since those early days (when Dr Fones recognized a need for a preventive operator, dedicated to the prevention of disease), it is disappointing that dental hygiene has not fully evolved to a point where our profession can be considered as a discipline.

As health professionals, dental hygienists have an ethical and moral obligation to society to pursue excellence in practice based on sound scientific evidence. This evidence is available to the dental profession through scientific publications, seminars and professional development programmes. Evidence-based practice is now taught globally in teaching institutions and oral health professionals are taught problem-based learning principles which empower them to carry these lifelong learning skills into their professional lives.

It is an unfortunate fact that very few dental hygienists are involved in research globally. Although dental hygiene education has evolved to university level, with the resultant benefits this provides for involvement in research by post-graduates that is specific to dental hygiene practice, it has not sufficiently evolved to a point where dental hygiene can be determined as a discipline. There are many determining factors that have prevented this progression and it is up to us, as a global community, to take this opportunity to map the course of the future of our profession.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene* as much as I did.

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