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## Summary of the International Federation of Dental Hygienists house of delegates workshop

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**Abstract:** *Objectives:* The 2007 International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) House of Delegates participated in a two day forum to discuss professional topics of interest and to provide a focus for the direction of the profession and the IFDH. *Materials and Methods:* Delegates were asked to select a work group of interest based on four main topics: promoting evidence-based dental hygiene practice, procedures, and products; disease prevention and health promotion for primary health care; promoting interprofessional collaboration; and, reframing dental hygiene education. Each work group was challenged to address key questions and create a summary statement with recommendations to the IFDH. *Results:* Each work group identified numerous areas for professional growth and development and created a list of aspirations for the profession and the association to achieve. *Conclusion:* The IFDH has made a commitment to the HOD to incorporate proposed recommendations and future aspirations.

During the 2007 International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) House of Delegates (HOD) meeting, delegates requested that time be provided to discuss topics of interest to the profession. Recognizing the importance of providing this opportunity, the Executive Council (EC) proposed a two day workshop be offered prior to the 18th International Symposium on Dental Hygiene (ISDH). This workshop was developed and cosponsored by the IFDH EC and Procter & Gamble. The workshop took place from June 27 to 28, 2010 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Highlights from this meeting are presented below.

Primary goals of the workshop were to:

- Host a forum where delegates have the opportunity to converse, in depth, on professional topics.
- Provide a focus for direction for the profession and the IFDH.
- Develop guiding principles for countries to provide support for each country's professional goals.
- Develop achievable recommendations related to professional topics.
- Connect with the World Health Organization's (WHO) issues to broaden perspective.
- Connect with other delegates and recognize their value as resources to each other.
- Focus more on accomplishments rather than deficits.

Four major topics were identified and delegates were offered the opportunity to prioritize their selection of the work groups. The topics for the work groups were:

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- 1 Promoting evidence-based dental hygiene practice, procedures, and products.
- 2 Disease prevention and health promotion for primary health care.
- 3 Promoting interprofessional collaboration: communication and building relations across all disciplines within health care.
- 4 Reframing dental hygiene education: future goals.

Work group members were assigned readings tailored to their respective topic and asked to discuss four key questions. Once each item was addressed, the work groups identified recommendations for the IFDH to consider as part of the organization's future goals.

Discussion questions for each work group appear in Table 1. Specific recommendations made to the IFDH for 'Promoting evidence-based dental hygiene practice, procedures, and products' are represented in the following list.

- IFDH should encourage member countries to promote workshops to educate dental hygienists to adopt best practices based on evidence-based decision making (EBDM).
- Encourage national associations to disseminate resources used and created during the IFDH workshop.
- Encourage national associations to provide dates of national symposiums, seminars, and conferences related to EBDM for the IFDH website (<http://www.ifdh.org>).
- Create a Special Interest Group on EBDM.
- Investigate having free access to the Cochrane Data Base for the membership.
- Each member association should encourage their members to register with the WHO Health Professions Global Network (HPGN) at <http://www.hpgn.org> to access resources and participate in forum discussions related to professional health care topics.
- Encourage the inclusion of EBDM workshops in future international symposia on dental hygiene.
- Encourage the publication of systematic reviews in the International Journal of Dental Hygiene.
- Create a research exchange webpage on <http://www.ifdh.org> to provide links to resources including the Cochrane Collaboration <http://www.thecochranelibrary.org>, Consort Statement <http://www.consortstatement.org>, grant options, list serves, and other online examples.

Recommendations proposed by Work Group #2, 'Disease prevention and health promotion for primary health care' follow.

- That the WHO publish a statement of support for the dental hygiene profession.
- Increase access to dental hygienists as primary health care providers in the prevention of oral disease in order to reach the goals as stated by the WHO.
- Develop an ongoing funded global dental hygiene programme to provide education and care for targeted groups most in need.
- Increase the number of dental hygiene graduates in relation to country populations.

Table 1. Discussion questions for work groups

Work groups	Discussion questions
Promoting evidence-based dental hygiene practice, procedures and products	<p>What influences dental hygienists when making product and procedure decisions?</p> <p>How evidence-based are these decisions?</p> <p>How do dental hygienists evaluate their decisions regarding practice, procedures, and products?</p> <p>How much evidence is enough to inspire change in dental hygiene procedures and in product recommendations?</p> <p>What recommendations would you make to the IFDH for promoting evidence-based dental hygiene practice, procedures and products?</p>
Disease prevention and health promotion for primary health care	<p>What are the modifiable risks that dental hygienists should be addressing in prevention activities?</p> <p>What is the role of dental hygienists in disease prevention and health promotion?</p> <p>How is the quality of life of the public improved by utilizing disease prevention and health promotion practices?</p> <p>In what settings can we promote disease prevention and health promotion, and how does this affect quality of life?</p> <p>What recommendations would you make to the IFDH for promoting disease prevention and health promotion for primary health care, to be shared with the WHO?</p>
Promoting interprofessional collaboration: communication and building relations across all disciplines within health care	<p>How would you deal with conflict resolution when involved with interprofessional collaborations?</p> <p>How do you seek opportunities to affect change when working with other professions?</p> <p>What professional disciplines should dental hygienists collaborate with to build relations and improve health care?</p> <p>How do you use the internet to communicate your knowledge as part of the Global Health Professions Global Network of the WHO?</p> <p>What recommendations do you have for the IFDH to promote interprofessional collaborations?</p>
Reframing dental hygiene education: future goals	<p>How do we educate dental hygienists to meet the changing demographics of society (taking into consideration the elderly, dentists retiring, proliferation of dental hygienists, economics, and increase of special care patients and medically compromised patients)?</p> <p>How do we encourage dental hygienists to become future dental hygiene educators and leaders?</p> <p>How do we teach decision making and critical thinking skills to dental hygienists?</p> <p>How do we develop humane thinking skills in the dental hygiene professional?</p> <p>What recommendations do you have for the IFDH to reframe dental hygiene education and establish future goals that are progressive and maintain high standards?</p>

Table 2. **Future aspirations**

Areas of interest	Aspirations
Health of the public	<p>Full recognition of the profession from other professionals/patients to understand the role of the dental hygienist</p> <p>Inoculation of babies with healthy bacteria and parents rinse with fluoride before birth of child and for approximately 18 months</p> <p>Vaccine used for dental caries and periodontal disease that is accessible to all</p> <p>DNA test performed by the dental hygienist to identify at risk patients</p> <p>Periodontal test for dental hygienists to provide targeted patient care</p> <p>Every child has a toothbrush and knows how to use it effectively</p> <p>Full scope of access as nursing practice enjoys</p> <p>Government funding of dental hygiene services globally</p> <p>At least 2:1 ratio of dental hygienists to dentists</p> <p>Patient acceptance of dental hygiene as a regular part of life and wellness – be seen as 'normal' process</p> <p>Be the primary dental care provider that people meet</p>
Communications	<p>Global network to assist with communication exchange</p> <p>Volunteer organizations listed on the IFDH website to that dental hygienists can provide support</p> <p>Evidence-based oral health prevention and promotion including health economy</p> <p>Global data base of patient education resources for use by dental hygienists and other professionals</p> <p>Use dental hygienists in an advisory capacity as the expert in the field of prevention and promotion (i.e. product development)</p> <p>Develop a dental hygiene interactive website for the public</p> <p>Market the profession better</p> <p>Link with the with corporate entities to insure that dental hygienists are recognized</p>
Education	<p>Increase dental hygiene population that has the required level of education to support the myriad of health care requirements of the global population</p> <p>All dental hygiene programmes at least at the baccalaureate level</p> <p>Create an international Masters/Doctoral programme in dental hygiene; distance learning programmes with residency component in the country of your choice; IFDH could coordinate the educators who provide the course/programme and residency</p> <p>Every country should have a school of dental hygiene to promote recognition of the profession within their own country and globally</p> <p>Equality of academic recognition, i.e. Dean of College of Dental Hygiene</p> <p>Global standardization of dental hygiene education</p>

Table 2. **(Continued)**

Areas of interest	Aspirations
Research	<p>More research in the field conducted by dental hygienists</p> <p>Global data base of research performed by dental hygienists</p> <p>Investigate the use of sonic sound waves to disrupt biofilm</p>
Enhancing the profession	<p>IFDH provide lobbying support for other countries as they develop the profession</p> <p>International self-regulatory governing body for scope of practice, education, CPD, etc. to encourage global mobility (may be part of the IFDH)</p> <p>Full scope of access as nursing practice enjoys</p> <p>Expand practice environments (independent practice)</p> <p>Mobility of license globally</p> <p>Dental hygiene representation on FDI and WHO</p> <p>All countries have dental hygienists</p> <p>Government funding of dental hygiene services globally</p> <p>International professional profile</p> <p>IFDH as the platform for innovation, design and entrepreneurship</p> <p>Health practices include physicians, dieticians, nurses, dental hygienists, etc with dental hygienists considered as a vital member of the team</p> <p>Recognized as an asset not a threat</p> <p>Specialized dental hygienists (caries risk assessment, periodontal assessment, hospital care, elderly, children, etc.)</p> <p>Compulsory presence of dental hygienists in alternative practice settings – hospitals, long-term care facilities, etc.</p> <p>Excellent image of dental hygienists</p> <p>Dental hygienists are proud of what they do</p> <p>Be the leader of oral health education</p> <p>Report best practices</p> <p>Be an inspiration for other dental hygienists</p>

- Initiate and endorse dental hygiene education programmes and dental hygienists as specialists in oral health promotion and practice.
  - Effectively utilize dental hygienists' full scope of practice relevant to population needs.
  - Identify and actively promote initiation of new dental hygiene training programmes in areas where they are not established or insufficient education opportunities exist.
- Work Group #3, 'Promoting interprofessional collaboration', identified five recommendations for the IFDH.
- Create an international symbol for the profession of dental hygiene.
  - Create informational brochures (one for professionals and one for the public) that define the role of the dental hygienist and promotes total health. And, distribute a brochure to each country to utilize for their individual action plans.

- Prioritize groups to be targeted for collaborative relationship building.
- That IFDH act as a gathering/review point for articles to be added to the HPGN with dental hygienists acting as a resource and not just participants.

Work Group #4, 'Reframing dental hygiene education', developed the following recommendations for consideration.

- Create curricula based on oral health needs of the population and community that specifically addressed the needs of underprivileged groups, cultural competence, evidence-based care, and collaborative practice.
- Encourage education programmes to work hand-in-hand with professional associations.
- Promote university-based research as well as research that focuses on teaching and learning in dental hygiene.

Once each work group completed their discussions and formulated their recommendations, participants were asked to create a list of future aspirations or goals for the IFDH and the profession that could be addressed within a 5–10 years time frame. Numerous statements were identified and focused on five key areas: health of the public, communication, education, research, and enhancing the profession. Table 2 summarizes these ideas for the future.

The EC has made a commitment to the HOD to incorporate proposed recommendations and future aspirations in the goals and strategies for IFDH. They will create a working document that addresses these recommendations and will maintain communication with the delegates to report progress made on a yearly basis.

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