



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Improving oral health

Greetings dental hygiene colleagues! It is a pleasure to serve as President of the International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) and to update you on the recently held House of Delegates (HOD) meeting and International Symposium on Dental Hygiene (ISDH) held in beautiful Cape Town, South Africa, from August 11 to 17 2013.

The HOD met for 2 days to conduct the business of the association. During this time, we discussed many issues and charted a course for the next three years. Of primary concern was the recognition that global oral health requires significant attention of oral health professionals.

As noted by the World Health Organization (WHO) (1):

- 60–90% of school children and nearly 100% of adults have caries.
- Severe periodontal disease is found in 15–20% of middle-aged adults.
- Approximately 30% of people aged 65–74 have no natural teeth.
- Oral cancer incidence ranges from 1 to 10 cases per 100 000 in most countries.
- 16–40% of children are affected by dental trauma due to unsafe playgrounds, schools, road accidents or violence.
- Oral disease in children and adults is higher among poor and disadvantaged population groups.

Marcenes et al. (2) reported that the overall disability-adjusted life-years caused by oral disease grew by 20.8% from 1990 to 2010. Prevention and health promotion measures are needed to change this dismal picture. To that end, the HOD determined that it was imperative to lead our goals for 2013–2016 with the charge to improve oral health worldwide. The IFDH will be focusing on initiatives that support and encourage community-based oral health prevention programs. Helping at-risk population groups identify a community oral health home, addressing risk factor reduction and providing prevention programs are examples of actions dental hygienists can take to reduce the burden of oral diseases for those in need. Corporate support will be sought to assist the IFDH in providing small grants to dental hygienists who create, implement and evaluate the health outcomes of community-based initiatives.

In addition to improving the oral health of the public, the HOD will strive to strengthen the professional profile of den-

tal hygienists, link dental hygienists worldwide and strengthen the leadership and infrastructure of the association. We are endeavouring to keep dental hygienists connected through online communications and to foster the development of new leaders to sustain our organization in the future. The HOD voted to formally register the IFDH in Switzerland and to hire a management firm to assist with our professional operations.

Following the HOD meeting, the 19th ISDH was held, organized by the dental hygienists of South Africa, most notably Marie Ferreira and Pamela Lambrecht. The energy generated at the Opening Ceremonies carried through the scientific presentations and exhibits. The opportunity to network, learn and generate excitement among dental hygienists was a hallmark of the meeting that centred on the theme Oral Health – Vital Link in Achieving Total Health.

At the Closing Ceremonies, Maria Perno Goldie, IFDH President 2010–2013, installed the new officers: JoAnn Gurenlian, President; Robyn Watson, President-Elect; Corrie Jongblöed, Vice President; Mary Rose Pincelli, Treasurer; and Wanda Fedora, Member-at-Large. Over the next 3 year term as officers, it is our shared vision to inspire, change, support, empower and stimulate our colleagues recognizing that our profession will grow as we evolve as individuals and healthcare providers. I encourage you to join us on this journey and to experience the growth of the IFDH. And, don't forget to mark your calendars for the 20th ISDH to be held June 23–25 2016 in Basel, Switzerland.

References

- 1 World Health Organization. *Oral Health*. Fact sheet No 318. April 2012. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs318/en> (accessed 10 September 2013).
- 2 Marcenes W, Ksabarum NJ, Bernabé E *et al*. Global burden of oral conditions in 1990–2010: a systematic analysis. *J Dent Res* 2013; **92**: 592–597.

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