



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

As we prepare for the International Symposium on Dental Hygiene (ISDH) in South Africa, August 14–17, 2013, we are also celebrating 100 years of the profession of dental hygiene. The International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) is 27 years old, relatively young in the profession as a whole. The House of Delegates' (HOD) meeting, prior to the ISDH meeting in August, is where members will make decisions that will facilitate creating a culture that promotes change and growth.

As we move forward, perhaps the IFDH will be more involved with the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Oral Health Programme (ORH). The goals of the ORH have changed with a greater emphasis on developing global policies oriented towards disease *prevention* and *health promotion*. Most of the evidence relates to dental caries and decay prevention, and control of periodontal diseases. The ORH wants to operationalize oral health policies around effective control of risks to oral health, based on the common risk factors approach (1). The focus is on modifiable risk behaviours related to diet, nutrition, use of tobacco, excessive consumption of alcohol and hygiene. Creating healthy environments involves implementing programs such as effective fluoride programs, including automatic fluoride administration through water or salt fluoridation, to programs based on the use of affordable fluoridated toothpastes.

The major challenges of the future will be to translate knowledge and experiences about disease prevention into action programs. To implement oral disease prevention programs globally, WHO acknowledges that existing partnerships must be strengthened, with national and international non-governmental organizations and WHO Collaborating Centres on Oral Health. Possibly the IFDH can play a role in implementing some of these disease prevention and health promotion programs? Conceivably, a committee on Community Health can be formed or the IFDH can become a repository for volunteer mission opportunities around the globe.

I invite you to join us in South Africa for the 19th International Symposium on Dental Hygiene. The symposium will focus on the important role of dental hygienists as primary health care providers in total health care. Emphasis will be on the link between the dental hygiene profession and other disciplines, such as dentistry and medicine. We recognize that oral health is an integral part of general health and well-being. Regarding oral health goals, there is an increasing recognition that dental hygiene services are an important component in attaining these goals. Research shows that the use of dental hygienists is not only very effective in increasing access to health care, it is also efficient (2). Join us also in Boston as we celebrate the 100th anniversary near the profession's birthplace.

I am privileged to have served as the President of the IFDH from 2010 to 2013. While the road has not been an easy one, it has been a learning experience. '*If there is no struggle, there is no progress*' (Frederick Douglass). I leave you in the experienced hands of JoAnn Gurenlian, RDH, PhD, who I know will lead the IFDH in an exceptional manner. I wish the best to all the new officers and delegates who will begin their terms in South Africa and to those who will retire.

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References

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