



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The power of prevention

As oral health specialists, we all understand the power of prevention. Saving clients from caries, periodontal diseases and oral cancer is an important aspect of our discipline. Changes in oral health begin with education and preventive procedures. This holds true for the IFDH. One of our stated purposes is to increase public awareness that oral disease can be prevented through proven regimens. Further, one of our current goals is to improve oral health worldwide. To that end, the IFDH has formed a partnership with the Global Child Dental Fund (GCDFund).

The GCDFund is a United Kingdom-based charity focused on improving the oral health of disadvantaged children around the world. They have several programs that offer unique opportunities to reach those in need. The Smiles and Hope program channels financial assistance, dental training and oral health supplies to children in regions which are afflicted by war, poverty or widespread disease. Charity volunteers travel to targeted countries to identify potential needs and facilitate oral health initiatives. The countries identified to date include Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Iraq, Tanzania, Timore-Leste and Zambia.

Another program is the flagship Leadership Program designed to bring the world's senior dental experts together to implement strategies that will advance oral health agendas and improve the oral health of children. The goal is to train and mentor 400 dental leaders over 10 years.

The GCDFund has also partnered with The Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF), a worldwide group of experts who are working together to promote integrated clinical and public health action to stop caries initiation and progression. The goal of this partnership is to ensure that every child born from 2026 should remain caries free during their lifetime.

Further, the GCDFund advances the concept of social and ethical responsibility through the creation of award programs; a

young dental leader program; Time Flies, a program for surgery owners; and, Student Dental Electives, an e-repository for dental students to disseminate their volunteer projects. For more information about GCDFund, visit www.gcdfund.org.

From the perspective of the IFDH, this partnership allows us to begin with a collaboration in which the GCDFund will support an annual dental hygienist volunteering to conduct an elective project that documents social responsibility aimed at improving the oral health of disadvantaged children. The GCDFund will provide the IFDH with an annual grant for five years, so oral health prevention projects can be conducted. The IFDH will market and publicize the awards and the winners. In addition, we will be looking ahead to further partnership opportunities. For example, together we may create a leadership program for dental hygiene students and newly qualified dental hygienists as well as participating in a 'one in a million' campaign. Within this campaign, we will work toward the end goal of placing one million toothbrushes and toothpaste in the hands of disadvantaged children.

It is inspiring to consider the opportunities from forming this partnership. Collaborating to improve oral health and prevent oral diseases helps us turn ideas into action and dreams into reality. We were able to create this partnership through the leadership and networking of our President-Elect, Robyn Watson, and Professor Raman Bedi, Chair of the GCDFund. Their work in oral health prevention brought our two groups together. They are the catalysts for change that ultimately may result in a significant improvement in oral health. Please join us in the exciting exchange and collaboration. For more information about our collaboration, visit our website at www.ifdh.org.

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