



World Dental Federation
Tour de Cointrin, Avenue Louis Casai 84
Case Postale 3
1216 Genève - Cointrin SWITZERLAND
Tel: +41 22 560 81 50
Fax: +41 22 560 81 40

Meeting with representatives of regional Chambers

Welcome speech and overview of the topics by the FDI President Dr. Orlando Monteiro da Silva

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today to address the Croatian Dental Chamber, a long time member of FDI and great supporter of its role in leading the world towards oral health. Being with you today can only increase our partnership.

I am also greatly impressed by the programme you have put together, which includes the main dental chambers in the region, from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Slovenia. This event is a prime example of regional cooperation. The presentations and discussion that take place here are like to have a significant impact on the future of dental medicine in the Balkan region.

Collaboration is at the heart of all FDI activities and we welcome your continued involvement. FDI is committed to working with its members around the world to improve access to quality care and to promote programmes of prevention to the wider population. In recent times we have intensified our dialogue with the aim of encouraging governments to prioritize and promote oral health and consider it as a citizens' right. We understand, of course, that, with all the demands on the public purse, resources are sadly lacking in many countries.

Nevertheless, it is important to establish the principle and stress the key role oral health plays in general health. Sometimes it is obvious: what we eat enters the body through the mouth. But, as we well know, oral health is a significant factor in how we relate to other people and to society in general. It provides a major boost to personal confidence and, ultimately, success.

The work of each FDI president is to lead, strengthen and update policy and strategy in response to new social, political, economic and technological developments. Here are some of my thoughts:

Dentistry is a constantly evolving profession and dentists need to constantly renew their knowledge and information to take into account the latest developments. Being 'ahead of the game' is what our customers expect from us.

For decades, the dental profession - dental medicine as it should be designated - has limited its scope to the "operative or restorative" approach to dentistry. Today, it is generally agreed that we must move closer to the medical sphere., especially as co-related classic areas of dental medicine, education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation demand this approach:

Over the last few decades, the scope of dental medicine has been limited essentially to operative and restorative dentistry, to the detriment of the important fields of education and prevention.

There are several reasons for this, the main ones being, first, a shortage of human resources in these two fields and second, a lack of focus on education and prevention in undergraduate and postgraduate university training. Third, it is expensive to set up and run a dental practice and neither education nor prevention is perceived as profitable. Finally, the two are identified as only 'minor' fields within dental medicine

Even the designation of the profession as "dentistry" in certain areas of the globe reflects this myopic view. This is not to say that the separation of dentists from physicians, in terms of intervention, professional organization and undergraduate training has not had countless positive outcomes; it has. But, it has also contributed to a certain distancing of dentistry from medicine.

This situation has, however, seen a turnaround over the past few years, largely due to a number of important factors, most notably the growing degree of invasive techniques used in dental medicine, coupled with an increasing patient awareness of the possibilities and risks of such techniques, as well as ever more demanding procedures regarding patient safety

Other factors include an aging population in some areas of the world and the increasing number of medically compromised patients with a number of concurrent conditions and therapies. Finally, even dentists themselves have become impatient with their excessive identification as technicians specialized in dental aesthetics.

It is my view that that the profession, and dental medicine in general, should have a much wider ambition. The various fields of education, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation are becoming increasingly interrelated; in the same way that relations between dental medicine and medicine in general, as well as other fields such as nutrition, psychology and sociology, are growing.

It is now time to admit that viewing oral health as somehow separate from general health is truly obsolete, and nowhere is the indisputable relationship between the two better illustrated than in the area of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), or chronic diseases as they are sometimes known.

NCDs, which include cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes, among others, are responsible for 60% of deaths worldwide: in 2008, 36 million people died from NCDs, around 80% of them in low- to medium income countries.

Oral diseases do not account for high death rates; nevertheless neglected NCDs such as tooth decay and periodontal disease affect more than 90% of the world's population and have an enormous impact on health. Tooth decay, the most prevalent oral disease, affects the life of billions of people worldwide and is a major challenge for public health in its complexity, scale and impact both on the life of the individual and the community.

For the dental profession to rise to the challenge in the fight against NCDs, it needs to adopt a more transversal, inter-professional approach in its relations with other health disciplines. This is especially the case for professionals directly involved in oral health issues, such as technicians in dental prosthetics and dental hygienists, as well as practitioners working other fields such as diabetes, oncology, nutrition, pneumology, paediatrics and public health.

This is what society, patients, other health professionals, policy makers, governments, NGA and industry demand and expect.

Dental medicine must keep on working towards ever higher goals, constantly surpassing itself. It must take the lead as the medical profession responsible for oral health so that the benefits it offers can be felt by billions of people around the world.

FDI, as the only organization of its kind at a global level, is in a privileged position not only to *lead the world to optimal oral health*, but also to unite everyone behind the concept of a World Dental Medicine Federation.

Since I became FDI President, my message has been about FDI commitment expressed by its actions and programmes in a number of important areas:

- Commitment to development: FDI projects, carried out with corporate partners, seek to improve oral health and quality of life within communities around the world. An example is Live.Learn.Laugh, already in its phase II;
- The second commitment is to scientific enquiry and continuing education, of which this 99th FDI Annual World Dental Congress is a prime example, bringing the latest in dental techniques and research;
- Another commitment is to working with partner organizations such as WHO to ensure that issues of quality assurance and patient safety are integrated into the curricula of dental medical training;
- A further commitment is to working with other partners, notably the United Nations Environment Programme, to ensure that dental medicine can continue to safely use the essential tools of its trade like amalgam;
- FDI is also committed to expanding the frontiers of dental medicine worldwide, for example with the Global Caries Initiative and the resulting Global Caries Classification and Management System.

It's been a tough road these last couple of years, with the world economic crisis affecting all of us. We have all been obliged to re-evaluate priorities and make adjustments in anticipation of an uncertain future. If there is one thing we have learned from this crisis, it is the extent to which we are all linked, unlike ever before; across geographical borders and every corner of business, from the corporate to the non-profit sector.

In this sense, it is especially important for me to be here today. FDI was founded on the notion of partnership—giving dentists a forum to share knowledge and grow stronger as a united network of healthcare professionals.

I wish you a prosperous year ahead and successful meeting today.