

Statement on the continuing medical education in dentistry

As an association of national dental organizations from the European Region, ERO-FDI is aiming to support the member organisations in providing the best possible oral and general health to the patients by formulating common principles and proposals to be adopted in each country.

Taking into consideration that:

1. United Nations General Assembly (2011) highlighted in its Political Declaration a worldwide recognition that oral diseases share the same social determinants and risk factors with other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). With this statement, it was clear that oral health can no more be defined separately from other health issues, which lead to an opportunity to reshape and expand the role of oral healthcare workforce.
2. Regarding oral health as an integral part of general health, the role of today's and future dentists is of great importance on maintaining the overall well-being of patients, as underlined by the Istanbul Declaration adopted in FDI 2013 General Assembly.
3. Contemporary dentistry is one of the health professions where the contact with the patient happens on a regular basis either with sick patients or healthy patients. This makes dentistry a unique profession that can give an important contribution to improve patients' overall health by taking on new tasks such as screening and monitoring non-communicable diseases (e.g. glycemic control, blood pressure control, cessation of smoking) and playing a complementary role in patients education and prevention of disease.
4. Through the contemporary dentistry approach, beside the current dental treatment philosophy, dental education system should focus on scientific and medical advances with an emphasis on clinical applications. This clinical application should focus on promotion, prevention, early screening and monitoring of the most common diseases in order to prevent diseases and refer to the specialist whenever they are screened.

5. In consistency with the necessity of the lifelong learning for continued competence and proficiency in all health professions, continuing medical education in dentistry is crucial. This will enable the dentist to review and upgrade his or her clinical experience and competency in medical fields that are in a permanent evolution.
6. Oral health professionals of today can be defined as the most often “front-line” medical professionals in prevention, early detection, and monitoring both oral and systemic diseases, and will become more involved in assessing and ensuring the overall health of their patients through screening, diagnosis and referral to a specialist.
7. Recognising all these particularities and the integration of oral in general health, today still exists an important gap between dental and medical education. It is therefore essential for the dentist to have the knowledge and competencies to undertake new tasks and address broader issues in medical care, including action on the social determinants of health to contribute on patients quality of life.
8. Continuing medical education in dentistry should enable the professional to:
 - maintain and develop future dentistry on a evidence and science based approach for optimum healthcare;
 - adress the needs for continuing development with regard to the new trends on medicine, dentistry and epidemiology considering the general health needs of the patient;
 - deepen medical knowledge, enhance skills and competences related to dental sciences;
 - assure high importance not only for the patients oral health but also their quality of life and patient safety.

ERO-FDI, referring to the profile of dentists from ERO zone, identifies the need to:

- raise awareness of dental profession with better clarification and more evidence of bilateral relationship between oral health and general health;
- clarify an inevitable multidisciplinary approach with the intention of not interfere with the competences of other health professionals;
- improve collaborations and synergies between different health professionals;
- enhance the extended role of dentists and dentistry.

This is a multidisciplinary task which is needed to underline health advocacy, where oral health is integrated.

European Regional Organisation is the first and model regional organisation of the FDI to support its member organizations in providing the best possible oral and general health to the patients. Regarding the outcomes, ERO supports a stronger integration of dentists into the overall health system to reinforce the recognition of their clinical competence and provide for an expanded role towards as stated in Vision 2020.

ERO-FDI recommends:

- to inspire, promote and support NDAs in their role of advisers recommending the review of their national education curricula on dentistry in order to deepen medical sciences education underlining that oral health integrates general health;
- to draw scientific programmes including related medical topics in the CE programmes, congresses and in the other scientific activities of dentistry;
- to collaborate, both at the national and international levels, with medical scientific associations participating and collaborating in scientific events and CE programmes;
- to foster joint educational tools such as publishing articles in our NDA journals, links to websites underlining the related issues, distributing NDA publications and guidelines¹; to give stronger and determined emphasis on interprofessional education and practice with improved continuing professional development.

ERO-FDI further points out the vitality of the continuing medical education in dentistry for the advocacy of global health whereof oral health is an integral part.

Resources:

FDI ERO Working Group Continuing Medical Education in Dentistry- “Evaluation of the extent of dental education regarding the linkage of oral health and general health” Questionnaire Results. Presented on ERO-FDI Plenary session in Tbilisi 2015.

FDI Policy Statement: The association between oral health and general health (revised version adopted in 2009).

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases. 16 September 2011.

FDI Vision 2020: Shaping the Future of Oral Health. FDI, Geneva, Switzerland: 2012.

FDI Optimal Oral Health through Inter-Professional Education and Collaborative Practice Report.

Council of European Dentists (CED) Resolution: Continuing Professional Development Of Dentists In The European Union, May 2013.

Council of European Dentists (CED) Resolution: Profile of the Dentist of the Future, November 2007.

¹Turkish Dental Association & Turkish Diabetes Foundation Joint Publication: Clinical Guidelines in Dentistry for Diabetes. To be linked in the ERO website.

FDI Istanbul Declaration: Oral Health and General Health. A call for collaborative approach. FDI General Assembly 2013.