

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL REPORTS 2020

The 2020 NDA's National Reports of 29 ERO member countries are examined and the common issues of pandemic, education and corporate dentistry in all of them are summarized as follows.

Pandemic

The Covid 19 pandemic has affected all areas significantly, also dentistry. During this difficult year all NDA's work concentrated on supporting the profession. On the beginning of pandemic, especially they tried to organize personal protective equipment for dentist and their team. On the other hand it was important to convince patients and politicians, that dentistry is safe also in Corona-times and to lobby politics to implement financial supports for dentist, that suffered a significant decline of patients attendance to the clinic. Especially at the first lock down between February and May only emergency care were provided. Until today we had several times of lock down, but during these times dental practices stayed open, with the protocols and barrier measurements of national health institutions. Because of the fewer treatments delivered in 2020 compared to 2019, in most of the member countries the income of dentists had decreased due to the pandemic and the economic impact. Because of these reasons most dental fees haven't been changed, but in Romania the increase of annual fees are a big concern for the Romanian Dental Association.

The other important issue for ERO countries in this pandemic year was vaccination. The vaccination was the only and the greatest hope of protection for Covid-19 infections and all NDA's worked with the Ministry of Health to vaccinate dentist and dental staff. In some countries like Turkey we succeeded to include also the medical and dental students into the first priority group for vaccination. On the other hand in Turkey dentists who are working at the public sector were assigned to the filiation teams.

Education

In 2020 all international activities were postponed and all scientific events were held online in the member countries. All NDA's put a comprehensive homepage online, which informs dentist about risk and hygiene management in dental practices, offers latest information on testing, vaccination and quarantine measures. Information for patients is also given and of course the homepages are regularly up-dated during the year. The pandemic has clearly affected dental and medical education, both undergraduate and post-graduate and also continuing professional education. Direct contact with students and young dentists in universities and other training settings were not possible and these negative effects on the experience and confidence of anyone in dental training must not be underestimated. In all countries dental schools, regulators, NDA's have issues for dental education at the top of their agenda for the next few years.

Corporate Dentistry

Corporate dentistry still remains a major concern in most ERO countries. Most of the NDA in the ERO region view investor-focused dental practice chains as very critical and problematic. The following alarming developments appear to be a danger for liberal dentistry.

1. Impact of dentists on treatment freedom
2. Loss of treatment quality (compromising the quality of dental care)
3. Encouraging over treatment (more services are built, as in comparison groups)
4. Interfering with patients ' right to choose their dentist freely
5. While at the same time dentists are paid a lower wage

Corporate dentistry, which ranges from small or medium-sized practice chains to large, sometimes world-famous companies, is very common in some ERO countries. Here are some examples of ERO countries:

In Italy, 60 DENTIX shut down abruptly, disrupting the lives of hundreds of patients, while Spain also has a negative experience with corporate dentistry companies such as I-Dental Case and Dentix Case. Corporate groups went bankrupt, leaving hundreds of patients in Spain with unfinished treatments. The procedure is still in the pre-trial stage. There is a chain of seven clinics in Belgium, with six thousand patients worried. All NDA fear the same problem happening in Italy, Spain and Belgium. Dentistry should not become an area for profit maximising investors.

Now I wanted to share some suggested solutions about corporate dentistry problem:

- Chamber of Slovakia asks for mandatory reporting the employed dentist in dental chain offices to be able to check their registration.
- For Spanish Dental Council, it is absolutely necessary to engage the government in the dentistry for a legislative change.
- Estonia and Greece Dental Associations suggest; licenced dentists should obligatory obtain at least 51 % of shares of dental entity; which is still existing in Turkey....
- BZÄK intends to introduce, a change in Dentistry act. The amendment is intended to ensure that all forms of professional practice must be based on the dentist's own responsibility, independence and non-commercial activity. In addition, conditions must be created for legal persons under private law whose business purpose is the practice of dentistry, which guarantee independence of the members of the profession and also for this form professional practice. This could be ensured, for example, by means of regulations on profile sharing, majorities of company share and voting rights or chamber supervision....

Regulations by Netherland Dental Association are below. They are important to discuss for the future of our profession:

1. Starting July 1st in Holland all dental practices with more 25 dental professionals need to have a (patients) client council.
2. Starting July 1st as part of a five-year experiment, registered dental hygienists are allowed to make X-Rays, give anaesthesia, and treatment primary cavities.
3. Starting July 1st patients have a right of access to their electronic file and the right to demand an electronic copy of that file.

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