Interview: World Oral Health Day with FDI President Dr Kathryn Kell

By Dental Tribune MEA/CAPPmea

Dr Kathryn Kell, FDI president, talks to Dental Tribune MEA/CAPPmea about the importance of oral health.

Tell me about the work FDI does and the World Oral Health Day program you run.

FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) is an international not-for-profit, membership-based organization that serves as the principal representative body for more than 1 million dentists worldwide; we are active in close to 200 National Dental Associations (NDAs) and specialist groups in 130 countries. Founded in 1907, FDI is a pioneer in the field of modern dentistry. FDI has a bold vision: to lead the world to optimal oral health. Speaking as the unified voice of dentistry, we collaborate closely with our members, oral health experts, allied health professionals, and industry partners alike to achieve this vision together.

We are very proud of our World Oral Health Day campaign, which is a platform for the public, the oral health community, and policymakers to help reduce the global burden of oral disease. Everyone has the power to take action to reduce the impact of oral diseases on individuals, families and communities. WOHD provides the ideal platform to grow awareness and encourage people to take charge of their oral health. By working together and coordinating efforts at local, national, and global levels, we can amplify the voice of the oral health community every year on 20 March.

Why is oral health an important topic beyond the teeth and mouth of an individual?

Oral health is much more than a beautiful smile – it is an essential part of our well-being. The mouth is a kind of ‘mirror’ to the body and reflects the status of our overall health. A look into our mouths can reveal nutritional deficiencies, signs of serious diseases, and the effects of unhealthy habits like tobacco or alcohol use. World Oral Health Day encourages all of us to protect our mouths and bodies by adopting good hygiene habits: eating a healthy diet that is low in sugar and high in fruits and vegetables, quitting tobacco use and avoiding harmful alcohol consumption.

What results did World Oral Health Day achieve over the past few years?

We are impressed by the increasing global reach of World Oral Health Day. In 2018, 162,995 participants in 544 events around the world celebrated on 20 March. 190 countries engaged in events and activities. Here’s a snapshot of the diversity of World Oral Health Day activities around the world: children’s education programmes, lectures, workshops, rallies, free dental check-ups, brush-a-thons, media outreach, social media promotion and more. The response in the media, including on social media, was staggering: in 2018, our campaign reached close to 660 million people.

What is your anticipation for World Oral Health Day in 2019?

This year, World Oral Health Day is all about action on oral health at every level. The campaign will promote good oral hygiene habits and the importance of adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle. It will also highlight the link between oral diseases and other noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and some cancers. The 2019 campaign theme, “Say Ahh: Act on Mouth Health” is filled with oral health messages and tips for good oral care that children and adults can take home and integrate into their daily self-care routines and share with their families and friends. Our campaign also urges oral health professionals to teach their patients how good oral health affects overall health, what’s more, it calls on policymakers to analyze the oral health challenges in their countries and implement policies that address oral disease at a local, regional and national level.

Why are partnerships with companies like Philips important to FDI and how do such organizations support World Oral Health Day?

As you know, the dental profession and the dental industry are essential partners in delivering oral health to populations around the world. Bridging the gap between the two is even more important today, as new materials and technologies are developed to accommodate the latest treatment philosophies. As leaders in the corporate world, companies like Philips have access to an international community of diverse stakeholders; by working together, we can promote oral health on a truly global scale. Since 2016, Philips Sonicare has played an integral role in ensuring the success of World Oral Health Day through global and local activations. In the UAE, Philips collaborated with several stakeholders such as Dubai Health Authority, universities and schools to raise awareness on oral hygiene. By continuing to unite our efforts, we can help make oral diseases a priority health issue and lead the world to optimal oral health.

By Dental Tribune MEA/CAPPmea
Interview: “You are not healthy without good oral health”

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Could you please give us a short introduction of yourself and the organisation?

I am Kathryn Kell and I am the President of FDI World Dental Federation. We are based in Geneva, Switzerland and in the organisation, we represent over a million dentists worldwide. We have around 200 members and we have about 130 members that are membership organisations. For example, I am a member of the American Dental Association—they are a member of FDI. The United Arab Emirates is a member of FDI. Those are the membership organisations, but then, in addition, we have other international organisations as affiliate and supporting members that are also very involved with us.

For instance, the International Association of Dental Research, the American Dental Education Association and several honorary member organisations, such as the International College of Dentists, the Academy of Dentistry International and the Pierre Fauchard Academy are some of our other members. We really have a great international group of people in our organisation.

I have been involved with FDI myself for many years. At one stage, I was the Chair of the Congress and Education Committee, which was why I was previously in Dubai at the last couple of meetings. So, I am rather familiar with this meeting and I am really great to be back here again and see the changes.

Can you tell us a little bit about how you are partnering with the industry? You mentioned it now.

3M is also a partner. Previously—I remember last year—we also partnered with other industry players. How important is that for you and what is the scale that you use to evaluate who should be the partner and how to grow the partnership?

We say “partners” we really are partners, because without our partners we would not be able to do anything. As a dentist myself, in my office, if I do not have any tools, I am not going to be able to practice. It is the same thing with FDI if we do not have a commitment to each other. And that is what we look for: really strong programmes where we can work together. At 3M, we had “Smiles around the World” and we had a really great, successful project in China last year. So, now we are looking forward to doing more.

And you are also doing that in India and Brazil, right?

Yes, that was also in the past project.

What about here in the Middle East?

In the Middle East, we actually need to start developing some programmes. We have a Middle East Education Committee and we have a person who is based in Lebanon actually. Wunir Dumed, who puts on educational programmes around the Middle East and North Africa.

Could you share a little bit about the vision you have, 2020? What is that all about?

Vision 2020 is our advocacy programme. Again, we have advocacy for our members, but we also advocate for oral health around the world and we do this by working with the World Health Organization and other United Nations agencies. I recently did a presentation in IOSPF in Sao Paulo, Brazil a few days ago on the Minamata Convention. Basically, people are looking at what other materials we are going to be using in the future. We know the future are composites, glass ionomers and some things we are looking forward to. We are very excited about some of the new things that we know you are going to be coming out with in the next few years, too.

We went to the 3M headquarters in the Minneapolis St Paul area and we talked to their research team about some of the things that they can do to develop materials that can be used in countries where even their water supply is limited—you cannot really use the water—they do not have air, they do not have the tools required to do effective glass ionomers in composites. I think if we all work together and look at how we can develop new materials that will really work in some of these countries, that would help us in the long run.

And for the region now, one of the main goals, especially for the UAE and the Dubai Health Authority, is to get rid of caries. Caries prevention is a big goal. How do you see FDI working with those kinds of entities? Have you already begun doing some activities with them through world oral health care? World oral health care is one of the things we do at Prevention, but I cannot stress enough how prevention is the key, because if we do not have caries and if we do not have periodontal disease to deal with, then we are in. Then we do not have oral cancer and the things that go along with oral cancer, such as tobacco and alcohol consumption. Then you know you are going to prevent all these other problems from happening. I think, if anything, FDI stresses prevention.

And this year, in March, can we expect anything special here for World Oral Health Day?

I am actually going to be back in Cairo on March 20th to celebrate World Oral Health Day. I will be there, and we are looking forward to having a big celebration in Cairo. The Egyptian Dental Association and the Egyptian Dental Senate are working hard to put something exciting together for us.

Along with Vision 2020, we have a new definition of “oral health”, but we have spoken about that before. Now, we are in our next stage. We are going to look at measurement tools, we are going to do surveys and the surveys are going to be global surveys, so that we can actually see what type of dental diseases are out there and which countries have more issues with caries, for example. Whereas other countries may have more issues with periodontal disease. This way we can actually get a focus on where we want to go with our vision. And then, eventually, we will develop projects that will be the next step.

How can companies or individuals who are not directly involved in the World Oral Health Day participate? How is that something that we can begin?

We really hope that everyone—all companies in our industry—would like to join us and be a part of this in any way possible. Companies can help celebrate with some of their dental organisations. So, there is a way to get involved.

Is there anything else you would like to share with our listeners—the readers of the Middle East dental community?

Our vision is to lead the world to oral health. It is about developing the future of healthcare, all of healthcare, all of health policies and anything you can do to bring oral health care into the health arena, in policies, in your governments. This can be very helpful. “You are not healthy without good oral health”—that is another message we want to convey.
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By E.M.S.

One of the true standout dental products launched at the biennial International Dental Show in Germany in 2017 is the EMS AIRFLOW Prophylix Master air polishing system. We were excited to see the EMS AIRFLOW PLUS powder was developed in-house by EMS. We were eager to understand the difference.

An unexpected benefit for EMS of the micro-sized particles of EMS AIRFLOW PLUS means that only an EMS air polisher unit can dispense the powder. Trying to use AIRFLOW PLUS with a non-EMS air polisher is nothing short of problematic, resulting, for instance, in over-dispensing of powder and clogging.

Periodontists and hygienists using the air polishing system have likened it to anyone that had a PC and thought it was the same as a Mac. Like a Mac, once you try the AIRFLOW PLUS, you immediately understand the difference.

AIRFLOW PLUS powder was developed in-house by EMS. We were eager to know more, so we spoke with Marcel Donnet, the EMS Powder Technology Research Group Leader in Nyon, Switzerland and posed the five most common questions dental professionals ask about EMS PLUS powder.

Marcel, firstly what is a powder engineer and what led you to this role at EMS?

We come in contact with powders on a regular basis, never the wiser. Upon closer inspection, we will realise that powders are very complex and its behavior is neither like a solid nor a liquid (despite it, in fact, being a solid). As a result, making a powder is actually complex.

A specific university tract does not exist for powder engineers; one must pursue a combined educational plan consisting of chemical and material engineering. I received my Bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering; I then pursued a Master’s degree and finally attained my PhD in material science department which had a laboratory working exclusively with powders.

Whilst conducting my doctoral studies, I had the opportunity to complete a lot of high-end research on powders. This placed me in the perfect position to one day work at EMS where we have to master the powder from the production to the mouth of the patient!

Air polishing has always just been seen as a hygiene powder which removes plaque and we’ve all heard stories of salty and gritty tasting powders.

What are some of the recent advances in prophylix powders?

When I first entered the air polishing world, my degree was optimised by means of various tests: it is impervious to humidity and reaction with the body. In addition, it is chemically stable and do not cause a taste change and supra and subgingivally up to the group of materials known as “polyol”, which are non-sugar sweeteners. From this group, Erythritol was chosen because the powders are chemically stable and do not cause any reaction with the body. In addition, it is impervious to humidity and taste good. The powder has been optimised by means of various tests. It is non-caking, non-sugar and also white.

How did you come up with the idea of using Erythritol as an ingredient for the AIRFLOW PLUS powder and what else distinguishes AIRFLOW PLUS powder from other powders on the market?

Innovation requires constant change and development. A new product takes time and today, we’re developing the new products of tomorrow. When one new product finally comes on the market, we’re already working on the next generation. Based on this philosophy, when we achieved a balanced formulation, this led us to announce that we’ve already searched for a new powder with hopefully even better characteristics. This research led us to the group of materials known as “polyol”, which are non-sugar sweeteners. From this group, Erythritol was chosen because they are chemically stable and do not cause a reaction with the body. In addition, in terms of treatment time and patient comfort. The shift from solely cosmetic application to an important and effective tool for patient care was complete. This paradigm shift was formally recognised when EMS received the PLURIENT innovation prize in 2007. The prize is significant because it is based on user questionnaires at dental trade shows over a full year. It is the voice of thousands of end users. From there, our innovative journey progressed and led to the new EMS AIRFLOW PLUS powder, which combines the advantages of a supergranular and subgranular powder in one. The EMS AIRFLOW PLUS powder is unique and patented. However, it was only part of the success story. This unique Erythritol powder required a bespoke delivery system, the AIRFLOW Prophylaxis Master. The EMS AIRFLOW Prophylaxis Master was launched in Australia last year and is the “enabler” of GUIDED BIOFILM THERAPY (GBT). GBT is an evidence-based solution for dental biofilm management developed by EMS. GBT refers to the clinical protocol for selectively removing the biofilm on the teeth and subgingival removal of pellicle. It is a deemed technique to assist, so as to maintain and promote good oral, gum, and teeth health over time.

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