Get to Know the IFDH

By JoAnn R. Guralen, RDH, PhD

The International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) is an organization designed to represent the interests of dental hygienists worldwide. Originally founded in 1975 by the International Liaison Committee on Dental Hygiene, the organization was formalized in 1986 in Oslo, Norway. Since that time, the IFDH has functioned as a global, international, non-governmental, non-profit organization that unites dental hygiene associations from around the world in the common cause of promoting oral health.

The purposes of the IFDH include the following:

- Safeguard and defend the interests of the profession of dental hygiene worldwide and represent and advance the profession of dental hygiene.
- Promote professional alliances with its association members as well as with other associations, federations and organizations whose objectives are similar.
- Promote and coordinate the exchange of knowledge and information about the profession, its education, and its practice.
- Promote access to quality preventive oral health services.
- Increase public awareness that oral disease can be prevented through proven regimens.
- Provide a forum for the interchange and discussion of issues pertaining to dental hygiene.

Currently, the IFDH consists of 26 member countries. These include: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Slovak Republic, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States of America. Individual dental hygienists, students enrolled in accredited dental hygiene education programs, and other professional organizations and health care providers may join the IFDH.

The IFDH endeavors to provide online resources for dental hygiene colleagues. Our website, www.ifdh.org, provides information about the process of seeking employment in member countries, research and education, national and international meetings of interest, as well as partnerships designed to improve the oral health of the public.

One of our exciting new partnerships is with the Global Child Dental Fund. We are working together to support a social responsibility award focused on improving the oral health of disadvantaged children. This volunteer project is designed to recognize, on an international level, registered dental hygienists and student dental hygienists who participate in a volunteering project which benefits disadvantaged children, mainly, but not exclusively, in low- and middle-income countries. Any dental hygienist who is either an Individual or Student member of the IFDH, or an IFDH Country Member is eligible to apply for the award. Applications are available through www.gclf-fund.org. Proposals are due by June 1, 2014, and awards will be announced on September 30, 2014. One winner will receive a cash prize of $5000 to implement the project. Two runner-ups will receive cash prizes of $1000 for their project.

In addition, the IFDH is investigating a partnership with “TestFloss.” This program is an innovative way to promote improved oral home care by texting reminder messages to brush and floss daily. Additional educational information is offered concerning oral care including saliva and the pH of the mouth, heart disease and oral health, stress, and diabetes. There is an app for iGads, iPod, IPod minis, and iPhone 5s as well as through ITunes at http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/testfloss/id579706527?mt=8. Every three years, the IFDH hosts an International Symposium on Dental Hygiene, providing an opportunity to network and learn the latest research and technologies supporting the growth of the professional profession. The next scientific symposium will be held from June 25 to 26, 2016 in Basel, Switzerland. For more information about this meeting, visit http://ind12016.dentalhygienists.ch.

We hope you will join us as we work together to improve the oral health of the public and support our profession around the globe!

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