FDI expert conference: Oral health for ageing populations

LUCERNE, Switzerland: From 3 to 5 May, the FDI World Dental Federation held a three-day conference on Oral Health for Ageing Populations (OHAP) in Lucerne. The invite-only conference focused on the theme of “Life-long oral health. A fundamental human right”. A total of 20 experts from around the globe, including the World Health Organization (WHO), gathered to discuss strategies to address the growing burden of oral disease and prevent tooth loss in elderly populations.

After the World Congress in March 2015, themed “Dental care and oral health for healthy longevity in an aging society”, which was held by WHO and the Japan Dental Association in Tokyo in Japan, the OHAP initiative was launched by the FDI in collaboration with GC International, the global branch of dental products manufacturer GC, in order to ensure oral health challenges are addressed in broader disease policies for ageing populations.

At the meeting, FDI President Dr Patrick Hescot stated, “It is a great achievement that populations are living longer thanks to advances made in the fields of medicine, technology, public health and policy. But it is our role as dentists to ensure that people not only live longer lives but healthier ones too, free of oral disease, which plays a fundamental role in securing a person’s overall health and wellbeing. Oral health is often a neglected area of healthy ageing, which is why this conference is so important to try and reset the balance.”

Dr Beat Wäckerle, President of the Swiss Dental Association and local conference host added, “Avoiding tooth loss is crucial for healthy ageing. Yet, the complete loss of natural teeth is highly prevalent among older people all over the world, with severe dental caries and advanced periodontal disease being the major causes. We must take urgent action and put preventative strategies in place.”

Although tooth loss is declining in many high-income countries, and older people are increasingly preserving their teeth in a functional condition, the latest figures from WHO indicate that the prevalence of oral disease is increasing in low- and middle-income countries. Most oral diseases and conditions require professional dental care; however, owing to limited availability or inaccessibility, the use of oral health services is markedly low among older people.

GC Chairman Makoto Nakao highlighted, “In countries like Japan, 30 per cent of the population are already over 60 years old, it is now low- and middle-income countries that are experiencing the biggest change and GC is committed to working with FDI and through its network of more than 200 national dental associations to address this issue on a global level and affect positive change for the millions of people suffering unnecessarily from oral disease, when they could be enjoying active healthy ageing.”

Outcomes from the recent meeting in Lucerne will be presented at the FDI Annual World Dental Congress, which will take place in Poznan in Poland from 7 to 10 September. In addition, strategies on combating oral disease in ageing populations will be launched at the event.

According to the Global Burden of Disease Study, oral disease affects 5.0 billion people worldwide and untreated dental caries affects almost half of the world’s population (44 per cent), making it the most prevalent of all the 291 conditions investigated in the study.

Poor dental health can affect both psychological and physiological health, leading to a significantly reduced quality of life. In addition to functional problems, poor oral health and dental problems can result in inflammation of the gingivae and a poor-quality monotonous diet, all of which increase the risk of malnutrition. The FDI stressed that this problem will only worsen if urgent action is not taken. WHO estimates that the proportion of the world’s population over the age of 60 will nearly double from 12 to 22 per cent between 2015 and 2050.

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From left: Dr Hiroshi Ogawa (WHO), Dr Patrick Hescot (FDI), Dr Beat Wäckerle (Swiss Dental Association), Makoto Nakao (GC) (Photograph: Gilberto Lontro/FDI)
Daily cleaning between your teeth matters

By Jordan

Effective removal of interproximal plaque is not achieved by a toothbrush alone. Dentists recommend that you floss daily, but very few people do this on a regular basis. Interdental brushes can be an attractive alternative to flossing and are a proven effective tool for reducing interproximal plaque. There are a number of different factors that need to be considered when choosing the right interdental brush, for example size, shape, the user’s manual dexterity and motivational level. The smallest size is best for those users who have healthy gums and small interproximal spaces. This is generally a good alternative for first time users. Daily use of an interdental brush gives results, especially in comparison to simply brushing.

Studies show that most of us (up to 90%) will experience some form of mild gum disease (gingivitis). Early symptoms of gum disease can be detected by inflamed gum tissue. This is caused by the bacteria in dental plaque. If the bacteria is not brushed away, it may form tartar and can eventually result in a cavity. As many as 30% of cavities are between our teeth. Studies have found that the population is aging and growing, and many of these people are keeping their own teeth. The good news is that gingivitis is reversible and preventable with daily brushing and cleaning between your teeth. A tooth has five surfaces that you need to clean thoroughly in order to get the best cleaning results. An international study showed that brushing with an interdental brush removes more plaque than brushing with a toothbrush alone. The study showed a positive significant difference using an interdental brush with respect to plaque scores, bleeding scores and probing pocket depth. The majority of the studies also showed a positive significant difference in the plaque index scores when using an interdental brush compared to using dental floss.

Motivation is a key element in succeeding with making interproximal cleaning part of the daily “brushing” session. Studies have found that the ease of use of a product does affect one’s motivation. The majority of the test study individuals preferred using interdental brushes to floss. They found them simpler to handle, using only one hand, and felt that interdental brushes were more time efficient.

The advice is to look for an interdental brush that has a sturdy but compact handle so that the users get a good and comfortable grip. Shorter handles give the user more control as the position of the thumb/ﬁnger grip is closer to the point of contact. A non-slip grip also helps controlled movement. It is important that the user is able to navigate easily in the mouth, reaching the back molars. We found the highest usage of interdental brushes among consumers between the ages of 40-49. 6 out of 10 of these use interdental brushes on average 3-7 times a week.

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Interview: “The future of dentistry is digital and focused on prevention”

An interview with Ueli Breitschmid, CEO of Curaden

By Marc Chalupsky, DTI

Swiss dental company Curaden is one of the few businesses in the industry that adopt a holistic approach to dentistry. The company combines high-quality dental products, pioneering training systems and prophylaxis concepts for long-term oral health. In this interview, CEO Ueli Breitschmid talks about new ways and knowledge in dentistry and optimising preventive care as key to good oral health.

Dental Tribune: Mr Breitschmid, Curaden aims to offer more than just dental care products. You advocate comprehensive training in the field of dental prevention. Why is this issue so important?

Ueli Breitschmid: Curaden is the only company that, in addition to manufacturing products, provides patients with the necessary knowledge and skills, in cooperation with trained instructors, to take control of their oral health themselves. We have developed our knowledge and products with the aim of teeth remaining healthy for a lifetime. Our corporate philosophy combines the innovative CURAPROX products, our dedicated system iTOP and the practical Prevention-One plan. Our goal is to reduce the prevalence of gingivitis, periodontitis and tooth loss. Therefore, we support comprehensive soft-tissue prophylaxis. Finally, this is the most common cause of poor oral health. We support prophylaxis to this end with our great interdental toothbrushes, our iTOP seminars and other services.

In any oral health discussion, it is always important to look at the combination of a high-quality product and the trained application thereof. The product alone without a trained user changes little or nothing. Therefore, 80 per cent of people in developed countries have gingival diseases because nobody has shown them proper oral hygiene. Only a well-trained person can motivate and instruct someone else.

How can control and continued motivation be achieved?

Patients and dentists should follow a regular schedule concerning both treatment and training. Today’s approach of one or two dental visits per year is no longer appropriate. Going to the dentist or the dental hygienist should not be an annual event, but more frequent. Just think how often we enjoy a beauty treatment or a pleasant massage. White and well-kept teeth are part of the modern concept of body awareness, much like a trip to the fitness centre.

A world famous example of achieving control and continued motivation is Martina Hingis. Hingis, who was once tennis’ youngest-ever number one champion, is our new global ambassador promoting a new level in oral healthcare. Over the next three years, the 35-year-old Swiss will be making some major appearances for our brand. And I would also like to mention KUSaq, one of the largest dental practices in Germany. Over 20 motivated dentists are working seven days a week and use the latest CURAPROX products. Besides that, KUSaq offers massage therapy, manicure and pedicure and much more. This is the modern concept of body awareness.

So, does this mean that most oral health problems can be solved through regular prophylaxis? Dental prophylaxis is only one aspect of oral health. It seems much more important to consider dental training. For years, leading dentists and dental companies have been in favour of a change in dental education. Preventive dental therapy should hold at least the same position as restorative dentistry. Every dentist knows how little is taught in dental schools about prevention. There are long-established and financially attractive prevention concepts for the entire office staff, including dental hygienists. Prevention-One: today’s digital solutions offer a painless and quick prophylactic therapy. The future of dentistry is digital and focused on prevention, and the dentist of the future as a preventive physician is responsible for patients’ overall health.

So you envision dentists and doctors working more closely?

Dentistry and medicine will certainly continue to move closer together, as the interaction between the oral tissue and other organs is now better understood. Slowly but surely, dentists will be recognised for their role in medicine. They are the gatekeepers of health, because the mouth represents the basic of all chronic diseases. In time, dentists will measure blood pressure and take saliva samples or blood samples. It will become possible to decrease the prevalence of chronic diseases, including cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, through better oral health. At the same time, medicine of the future will be able to detect signs of gingivitis or periodontitis.

Mr Breitschmid, you focus on holistic oral health prevention rather than restoration. What concepts does Curaden offer in this regard?

We focus on optimal prophylaxis for patients and dental professionals. Individually trained oral prophylaxis (iTOP) is our internationally well-known educational system. For this purpose, we have been working together with established dentist Dr Jiri Sedlauer. He has revolutionised the approach to teaching, motivation and control of individual prophylaxis for long-term dental health. This approach includes regular training, the proper tools and a good dose of motivation. First, we begin with the dental professionals, who pass their new knowledge and skills directly to patients. All our iTOP seminars are supervised by independent dentists and dental hygienists who have completed the training themselves.

iTOP addresses one of the major issues in every dental practice: how to motivate and instruct patients to brush teeth perfectly, with good outcomes. Through iTOP, we offer individual training with regular monitoring and correction of the learnt prophylaxis techniques. We use the latest technologies and modern cleaning techniques; in short, the right mechanical plaque control. Of course, the seminars are open to those dental staff with years of experience too. Thereby, they learn to brush teeth and gaps properly.

How long is the iTOP programme?

The iTOP programme is structured consecutively. We offer multi-day seminars for both beginners and advanced participants, as well as for prospective iTOP trainers. Our recall seminars enhance knowledge and provide additional motivation. iTOP also teaches comprehensive strategies. Communication with the patient and within the team are key to dental health. A further advantage of iTOP is the global coverage of our educational programme. Whether in Europe, in Asia, in North America, dental staff can benefit from the comprehensive solutions of our iTOP training.

I would like to recommend our iTOP workshop on 23 June in Basel in Switzerland to all dental hygienists. This is being held as part of the 2016 International Symposium on Dental Hygiene. We have invited top speakers from Ireland, South Africa, Canada and Switzerland to talk about their experiences with iTOP, in their respective fields and how it has helped them to achieve sustainable oral health in their patients.

With iTOP for students, Curaden is targeting students and young dentists. Why does Curaden place so much importance on the early training of students?

First, students should maintain their teeth for life. Only then can they treat their patients. The dentist and patient should always have the regular care of their own teeth with good toothbrushes, toothpaste and interdental brushes. This allows the aspiring dentist to become familiar with how the damage to be repaired arose. Early on, we convey the principle of touch—the proof is in the pudding.

How can dental professionals better apply your iTOP concept for the benefit of the patient and practice?

We offer them a financially attractive service package for the long-term dental health of their patients, called Prevention-One. Prevention-One is our innovative treatment approach to prophylaxis services. The plan includes advanced training, education and dental procedures, as well as CURAPROX products. We believe strong, local principalities represent the future of dentistry.

No matter the product, whether Prevention-One or CURAPROX, we strive to be accessible to patients. In 2015, we founded the first Curaden clinic, in the heart of London. The practice offers top facilities and, of course, all the products and concepts of Curaden.

Thank you very much for the interview.