Message from the president

One of the unique features of the FDI Annual World Dental Congress (AWDC) is the forums that are held on issues of science and dental practice. Designed as gatherings of people whose aims are to promote the interchange of ideas, usually on a defined theme, the forums include short presentations by world-renowned researchers, clinicians, educators and practitioners and the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. A relaxed atmosphere encourages the various participants in the audience to share their experiences and ideas.

I urge everyone, who will attend our AWDC in Stockholm in September, to attend and participate in some of these forums, so we can include your concerns, advice and experience when dealing with these issues. The FDI is the nexus for oral health professionals, facilitating information transfer and promoting optimal oral health for all people. Each year our interactive forums are staged as a valuable means to achieve this knowledge access and the common understanding that result from discussions among dentists from many different countries, functioning in various facets of our profession.

Some forums focus on current scientific or clinical issues, such as this year’s session on “Prevention and Control of Periodontal Disease.” The presentations in this forum will provide enhanced understanding of periodontal and systemic inflammation as well as the relationship between oral and systemic health. Most patients have questions about these issues and the latest information will prepare us to provide appropriate answers. We recommend that you consult the experts at our forum and not the undefined media reports on the issues.

Other forums will address controversial topics and developments in dental practice such as “Non Professional Investment in Dental Practice.” In many countries, commercial enterprises are acquiring dental practices and exerting varying influences on dentists and the provision of patient care. Is this a positive development that increases access to care or a potential negative influence on the quality of treatment that might encourage consideration of profit over quality or financial gain over minimal intervention and prevention? This forum promises to be a lively discussion of the issues of third party control of dental practice. Hopefully the experience of various national associations in dealing with the changing environment of oral health care will give insight on how best to manage these changes to ensure we are able to provide safe, appropriate and affordable care to the public.

“Promoting Excellence in Dental Education” will appeal to those interested in hearing the latest developments in dental education and trends for the future. How effectively are we educating the next generation of dentists to deal with the growing oral health needs of the world’s population? How important is it for needed changes to treatment and prevention modalities to be firmly entrenched in the dental curriculum? How can or should the education system influence shifting demographics and the global mobility that is becoming more common in our profession? Encouraging a positive future for the delivery of oral health care involves understanding the needs of dental educators and their programmes.

“Health Diplomacy – Oral Health In Support Of Peace around the World” is a forum that will take advantage of the amazing ethnic diversity represented by the dentists attending our AWDC, to discuss the possibility of nurturing a more peaceful world through transborder pursuit of excellence in science and health. You will hear about case stories with a shared vision that have been implemented in faculties, facilities and clinical services. The more we recognize the burden of oral disease in many parts of the world, the more important it becomes to develop networks for sharing best practices, technology and other resources to assist the improvement in health that are so desperately needed. The FDI believes that good oral health is the right of all and not simply the privilege of a few. We need the support of each of the more than one million dentists worldwide, who are FDI members, to help us realize our vision of “Leading the world to optimal oral health.”

“FDI Congresses” is a forum that will consider the role of FDI congresses and conferences in the development of dental education. What impact do FDI congresses have on dental education and what is the opportunity for FDI congresses to be better?! Join the discussion.

New executive director to begin 21 August

Dr David Alexander to join the FDI

A specialist in dental public health and a former general dentist, Dr Alexander has extensive commercial and administrative experiences from various settings, most recently with GlaxoSmithKline, where he was responsible for developing oral health strategy and building key partnerships with major dental organisations and leading dental schools throughout the world. Having graduated in dentistry from the University of Liverpool, gained a masters degree in Community Dental Health from the University of London and undertaken a residency in dental public health at the National Institutes of Dental Research in Bethesda, USA, Dr Alexander has lectured around the world at major dental congresses and has published and presented many abstracts and peer-reviewed papers. He is well-recognized by his peers in industry and the leadership of organised dentistry, only recently having led a working group of world leaders from industry and dental education to draft consensus recommendations for industry-academic partnerships at the 9th Global Congress on Dental Education.

“The FDI Council looks forward to working with Dr Alexander, who has many years of experience in dentistry and the area of global oral health. His track record and expertise will be a great asset to the FDI as the federation continues to strive for its vision of leading the world to optimal oral health. We are confident that his proven leadership will be instrumental in helping the FDI reach its strategic aims,” said Dr Burton Conrad, FDI President.

“Lack of good oral health has severe consequences for general health and quality of life for the majority of the world’s population who have little or no access to dental care or preventive services. I look forward to working with the FDI Council, member associations and other partners and stakeholders to ensure that the devastating consequences of these preventable diseases can be avoided. The FDI is unique in its position to provide leadership,” added Dr Alexander.

Dr Alexander was selected among candidates from around the world. An international executive recruitment agency was employed for the search for and selection of an Executive Director. His appointment was unanimously endorsed by Council at the mid-year meeting in May.

Honouring FDI past president, Dr Yoon, for his contributions to oral health development

FDI Past President, Dr Heung-Ryul Yoon, passed away in Seoul, Korea, at the age of 67, after fighting a terminal illness

Dr Heung-Ryul Yoon was President of the FDI World Dental Federation from 2005–2005. As FDI President, Dr Yoon was dedicated to the development of oral health worldwide.

During his term as FDI President, the Planning Conference for Oral Health in the African Region, the first ever conference on oral health on the African continent of its magnitude and impact, was organised by the FDI and co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) in April 2004. A total of 189 delegates from 48 African and nine non-African countries, including 10 ministers of health or finance and approximately 50 chief dental officers attended.

Not only was Acompletemeasure for oral health reached in Africa through the FDI during Dr Yoon’s presidency, but a significant achievement was also accomplished on a global level. In 2005, the FDI/Unilever Live.Learn.Laugh programme was officially established. The aim of the Live.Learn.Laugh programme is to improve oral health for people around the world. Through this partnership, the FDI and Unilever give support to national dental associations in 41 identifiable national and local oral health promotion programmes. To date, 41 national dental associations are involved in the Live.Learn.Laugh programme and the contract has been renewed.

In addition, Dr Yoon was instrumental in improving the FDI’s association with the WHO through his relationship with former WHO Director-General, the late Dr Lee Jong-wook. His rapport helped FDI enter into a collaboration with the WHO and a landmark meeting was held between the FDI Council and the late Dr Lee during Dr Yoon’s term.