

## **“Vision of Oral Health for All” (International Journal of Oral Health Dentistry)**

More & More people realise the importance of good oral health and how negative the impact of oral diseases can be on daily performance, social participation and general well being. Oral diseases are to a very extent preventable, yet when they occur they can be among the most expensive to treat or cure. Despite the central role of the mouth as gateway to, and mirror of, the body, general knowledge about prevention of oral disease is limited. Health planners and politicians are often unaware of the magnitude and impact of oral diseases and believe dental treatment and preventive services are an optional luxury. Others think that oral care is just too costly for their health care system, and often no budgets are allocated to this sector. Yet simple, effective and evidence based interventions exist that can help, in rich and poor countries alike, to reduce the burden of oral diseases significantly.

“Oral health is a neglected area of international health”- these words of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Margaret Chan, expressed during the landmark 120<sup>th</sup> session of the WHO’s Executive Board in 2007, were a wake up call for the international health community. Oral health is subject to a number of key risk factors, Fortunately, avoidance of risk factors such as high sugar consumption, poor nutrition, poor basic hygiene and tobacco use will also prevent many other serious health problems. Good oral health is not something that we should take for granted. The recognition of oral health as a basic human right commits all of us, particularly the dental profession, to do everything possible to improve access to quality care and preventive programmes- for every citizen of the world.

In the last few decades we have seen developments and improvements which had a global impact, ranging from introduction of fluoride toothpastes in 1955 to the reduction of one of the major risk factors – tobacco- by 2005 WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The good news is that nearly all oral diseases are preventable and most are also treatable. Unlike our colleagues in other fields of health, we are lucky enough to have both knowledge and the tools to significantly improve oral health worldwide, drastically improving both quality of life and economy productivity of the nations.

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