

Oral health suffers from tobacco use – dentists need to act now

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Geneva, 31 May 2005 – The FDI World Dental Federation and the World Health Organization are today launching a jointly developed guide for dentists and dental associations. They do this to mark today's World No Tobacco Day dedicated to the role of health professionals in tobacco control.

Tobacco-induced oral diseases contribute significantly to the global oral disease burden. Tobacco is a risk factor for oral cancer, adult periodontal diseases, and congenital defects such as cleft lip and palate in children whose mother smokes during pregnancy. Tobacco use suppresses the immune system's response to oral infection, retards healing following oral surgical and accidental wounding, promotes periodontal degeneration in diabetics and adversely affects the cardiovascular system. The dentist and the dental team are important key persons in tobacco prevention and may use the numerous effects of tobacco on oral health in motivating patients to quit use of tobacco.

"It is my sincere hope that this guide for dentists and oral health professional organisations will be helpful in increasing awareness and in facilitating tangible engagement in tobacco control on the individual patient level as well as in the broader political context. The FDI is prepared to assist and support this process wherever possible" said Dr JT Barnard, Executive Director of the FDI on the occasion.

Prof Poul Erik Petersen, Chief of the Oral Health Unit at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, emphasised that "the oral health team worldwide play an important role in preventing that children and adolescents adopt the use of tobacco - either in the form of smoking or chewing tobacco. Oral health professionals and dental associations worldwide are encouraged to use the WHO policies such as the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control for their future work and design national prevention projects jointly with health authorities."

The advocacy guide is available from the websites of the FDI and the WHO:

www.who.int/oral_health

www.fdiworldental.org

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