

Group E

Consensus Paper

Interprofessional education and multidisciplinary teamwork for prevention and effective management of periodontal disease

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Introduction

The background for this group's discussion was presented in the Initiator's review (Jin 2015). This paper focused on the key issues relating to interprofessional education and a multidisciplinary teamwork approach for the prevention and effective management of periodontal disease. A number of important issues were identified for effective periodontal management, including the role of general dental practitioners in identification of risk factors and risk management as well as the emerging evidence on the link of periodontal disease to a number of systemic diseases and conditions. The need for a multidisciplinary approach in managing periodontal

patients through the teamwork among general dental practitioners, specialist dentists and medical practitioners was identified as key to successful treatment outcomes. An overarching theme of periodontal literacy for patients, dentists and allied health professionals was then developed. From this framework four key questions were identified for further discussion:

1. What are the challenges that we face to achieve global periodontal literacy?
2. What are the strategies which can be embraced to achieve global periodontal literacy?
3. What resources would be needed to achieve global periodontal literacy?
4. What would be the operational plan to achieve global periodontal literacy?

Presented at the First IAP Conclave, Bangkok, Thailand, 11-13 April, 2014

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In these deliberations a prime consideration was the particular role, if any, that the International Academy of Periodontology (IAP) could play in these processes.

Definition of “global periodontal literacy”

Following some discussions the group agreed that global periodontal literacy should be defined as “the understanding and awareness of periodontal health and diseases by the dental profession and the public.”

Question 1. What are the challenges that we face to achieve global periodontal literacy?

This question needs to be addressed at a number of different levels that recognize that the challenges we face to achieve global periodontal literacy are present in dental education, the healthcare profession, regulatory agencies, governments and among the public.

With regard to the dental profession it was clear that there is a need to change the mindset and attitude of dental educators, students and practitioners to understand the importance of appropriate periodontal evaluation and patient management. In order to achieve this, the shortfalls in effective accreditation processes need to be overcome and processes that will ensure compliance of educational standards need to be in place. In order to maintain educational standards, core competencies for the delivery of periodontal care need to be established. This can best be achieved through the development of formative and summative assessment methods that ensure achievement of the competencies.

The public must also be educated to achieve global periodontal literacy. However, a number of obstacles have been identified that hinder the progress. Demographic, socio-economic and cultural diversity is always an issue as we try to gain acceptance by the public of good oral and periodontal health, and this is usually linked to a general lack of awareness of periodontal health and appreciation of the benefits of periodontal care. With the emergence of the electronic age and easy access to medical information via the worldwide web, the significance of the public obtaining misinformation from alternative resources is ever increasing. Finally, a general level of insufficient understanding of risk factors for periodontal diseases (i.e., smoking) continues to hamper efforts to fully inform the public regarding periodontal disease and its management. Clearly there are very significant issues with regard to behavioral modification and public understanding of periodontal disease and periodontal care.

Question 2. What are the strategies that can be embraced to achieve global periodontal literacy?

Strategies to address the above issues were determined to be leveled at the dental profession and the public. With regard to strategies to enhance the profession’s role in attaining global periodontal literacy, the group determined a number of approaches that should be considered. The formation of a pool of experts to develop and propose guidelines to achieve periodontal health was considered

to be an essential starting point to achieve this goal. Through these panels, dental educators and practitioners could be fully informed at an evidence-based level on the ability of periodontal therapy to enhance the outcomes of dental treatments. Subsequently, models of formative and summative assessment methods should be developed to ensure the achievement of core competencies. In doing so, guidelines could be formulated for accreditation, which would promote the development of educational standards, their compliance and the identification of core competencies.

Other novel approaches to enhance the profession’s role in attaining global periodontal literacy included the establishment of an award system to recognize contributions to the achievement of global periodontal literacy. Furthermore, it was considered important to develop an interactive website by creating segments for the profession and to utilize the social media outreach to enhance the profession’s perception of the importance of periodontal health and care.

Strategies to enable the public’s role in attaining global periodontal literacy also require consideration of a number of approaches. In order to engage the public it was considered desirable to partner with stakeholders in developing an educational campaign. For example, media campaigns to improve public perception on the importance of periodontal health and care must be undertaken. By working with appropriate agencies access to periodontal care could be enhanced. It was considered that one of the best ways to achieve this was to encourage global bodies to establish “Periodontal Healthcare Week” following “World Oral Health Day” on March 20 yearly. As with the profession, it was also considered desirable that an interactive website be developed for the public; this could also utilize social media outreach approaches to enhance public perception on the importance of periodontal health and care.

Question 3. What resources would be needed to achieve global periodontal literacy?

In order to achieve the above goals it was considered essential to recognize there will be significant resource implications. The greatest resource we have is the dedicated educators willing to participate in programs to train both dentists and the public. This resource must continue to be carefully nurtured to ensure the future is well supported by these experts. Contemporary education models must be adopted globally. For example, “vertical” models for dental education should be embraced, as they will enhance the training of dental students in a more holistic approach to patient care and management. In parallel with maintaining a good educational model and pool of educators, and notwithstanding the role universities play in this process, other sources of support must be recognized and developed.

These would include education and research foundations by recognized specialist bodies such as the American Academy of Periodontology, European Federation of Periodontology, Asian Pacific Society of Periodontology, and other regional dental and periodontal societies. The role of the media (both print and electronic) cannot be underestimated, and when further formulating the goals of global periodontal literacy this powerful conduit to the public must not be overlooked. In addition, government and non-government agencies could be pivotal in providing valuable resource support for our goal of global periodontal literacy. Finally, we cannot discount the valuable support that can be provided by commercial partners to achieve this goal. An excellent example of this is the outstanding support by the dental industry for this International Academy of Periodontology Conclave.

Question 4. What would be the operational plan to achieve global periodontal literacy?

In order to further this plan for global periodontal literacy, an action plan was discussed. Initial needs were identified for the IAP Board to prioritize the strategies for their implementation in a reasonable timeline and to identify the appropriate resources to achieve the goals. To ensure good ongoing outcomes these processes would need to be continuously assessed and reviewed.

Recommendations

From this consensus report the following recommendations are made to achieve global periodontal literacy:

1. Role of the International Academy of Periodontology

- IAP to form a pool of experts to give guidelines for minimal and optimal periodontal health care, while considering logistical difficulties in different regions of the world.

2. Training the educators for dental students

- Must be equipped with skills to train dental students to evaluate the periodontal status of their patients, including risk assessment and treatment planning.
- Be able to help the students to understand the importance of assessing the periodontal needs of their patients.
- Must have the necessary skills to evaluate and assess dental students' knowledge of periodontal health care.
- Be able to demonstrate to students the importance of interdisciplinary dentistry.
- Be able to encourage students to participate in outreach/extension activities as expected by socially responsible clinicians.

3. Training the educators for postgraduate/post-doctoral students

- Agencies need to be identified that would ensure postgraduate/post-doctoral periodontal educational standards on a global basis.
- Development of an international pool of academic and clinical periodontists who would serve as a mentoring source for those programs in the process of either initiating and/or enhancing their postgraduate/post-doctoral programs. The IAP would be seen as a logical contributor to such a program.

4. Research

- Research must be recognized as the cornerstone to advance periodontal health literacy.
- International periodontal societies should pool their resources and knowledge to develop or initiate research protocols that could be universally applied for the enhancement of periodontal health. The IAP would be seen as an appropriate body to coordinate such a program.
- Engagement of the corporate sector as a resource and mutual colleague should be encouraged so as to enable global research initiatives.

5. IAP awards as an effective mechanism to enhance global periodontal literacy

- It was discussed and decided that awards at various levels could be granted to dental students, undergraduate/pre-doctoral and graduate/post-doctoral educators for the recognition of their achievements in educational and research programs related to periodontal education.
- Incentives by the IAP for every institution through essays/competitions/projects for innovations in periodontal health care for all patient demographics from pediatric through geriatric patients.

Reference

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