

Oral Health for a Better Life

Oral health substantially influences people's physical and psychological well being, affecting chewing function, appearance, social integration and well being.³ The two major diseases responsible for tooth loss, namely caries and periodontitis, have a substantial impact on the quality of life in all age ranges of the population. For example, caries substantially affects children's quality of life through pain and discomfort, eventually leading to acute or chronic infections, in turn influencing nutrition and overall growth.⁶ In developing countries, there is an increase in the incidence of chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes, but caries incidence is also rising, which may lead to a deterioration of oral health related quality of life.

One of the major causes for tooth loss in the adult population is chronic periodontitis which, when left untreated, leads to progressive destruction of the tooth-supporting apparatus, reduces chewing function, impairs esthetics, reduces quality of life and has a significant impact upon escalating public health costs. Emerging evidence also points to the negative consequences of periodontitis upon general health. It has been shown that periodontitis increases the risk of poor glycemic control in patients with diabetes mellitus as well as diabetes complications and associated morbidity, while treatment of the disease can improve glycemic control in type 2 diabetes patients.¹ Moreover, periodontitis is also associated with cardiovascular diseases and adverse pregnancy outcomes, while some studies have linked periodontitis with nosocomial pulmonary infections, certain types of cancer and rheumatoid arthritis.^{2,4,5} The recent Manifesto of the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) calls upon all dental and health professionals to act in the prevention, early diagnosis and effective treatment of periodontal disease in order to combat the devastating oral and general health effects for the individual and society (www.perioworkshop.efp.org). It has been signed by all major periodontal societies in Europe.

It is more than ever clear that caries and periodontal disease should be acknowledged as major public health issues, and that all dental and medical professionals should be provided with relevant guidelines to implement primary and secondary prevention.



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