Dear reader,

The FDI’s recent decision to hold yet another of its annual congresses in an Asian country is good news for dentists in the region, not necessarily because it will significantly advance dentistry there, but because it will offer the international dental community a window to the latest achievements in the region to date. Particularly in Thailand, where the 2015 congress will be hosted, the quality of oral health care services has made a huge leap, fuelled by dental tourists who demand state-of-the-art-treatment at lower costs. On the other side, an enormous gap in access to dentistry still exists between the major cities and the countryside, where only a fraction of people are able to visit a dentist regularly. For discussions about these issues and finding solutions to them, the FDI congress will be an important platform. I hope to see you also in New Delhi in 2014, where the organisation’s next congress will be held in partnership with the Indian Dental Association.

Yours sincerely,
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Minimum intervention in dentistry

The concept of minimum intervention in dentistry (MID) ranges from early diagnosis of oral disease to appropriate intervention, which includes prevention, control and treatment for the purpose of conserving natural tooth and periodontal structures. A number of MID measures have recently become available, including the very early detection of dental caries using Quantitative Light-induced Fluorescence (QLF). Moreover, the virtual FDI Caries Matrix, in terms of non-cavitated and cavitated lesions in enamel and dentine, has been proposed. This concept makes preventive restoration in preschool children, even by trained dental auxiliaries, possible. Moreover, effective use of self-care fluoride toothpaste during toothbrushing has been suggested for every age group, especially the correct minimal amount of toothpaste used in children to prevent both caries and fluorosis.

For caries restoration, partial caries removal during cavity preparation has been suggested, which, according to research, appears to reduce the incidence of iatrogenic pulp exposure and therefore the risk of pain and infection. Simplified and modified atraumatic restorative treatment, a further development of atraumatic restorative treatment (one of the original MID methods of restoration) and a preventive method of restoration for primary teeth that entails partial caries removal and filling with encapsulated self-curing glass ionomer cement, has been proposed. This concept makes preventive restoration in preschool children, even by trained dental auxiliaries, possible. Moreover, effective use of self-care fluoride toothpaste during toothbrushing has been suggested for every age group, especially the correct minimal amount of toothpaste used in children to prevent both caries and fluorosis.

There are several interesting MID measures in terms of periodontal disease, such as non-surgical or minimally invasive surgery in periodontal therapy, and single-flap or flapless implant surgery. The effectiveness of the bucal single-flap approach for surgical debridement of deep intrasosseous defects has been shown to be comparable to the double-flap approach in terms of clinical attachment level gain, probing pocket depth reduction and minimal gingival recession, six months post-surgery. Another method is flapless implant surgery conducted with help of the tissue punch technique instead of having to raise a mucoperiosteal flap. Reports show that this reduced operational time, accelerated post-surgical healing and even increased patient comfort in some cases.

A huge burden

Dentists in Japan continue to practise under very difficult circumstances as the Japanese society is ageing at the fastest rate in the world. It only took my country’s aged population 24 years to go from 7 per cent in 1970 to 14 per cent in 1994. The unique phenomenon of Japan’s rapid ageing resulted from the extraordinary increase in average life expectancy.

Unfortunately, healthy life expectancy has not kept pace with this and statistics show that there are many elderly people who require nursing for ten years or more after they have reached the age of 72. This places a huge burden not only on these individuals, but also on their families and society as a whole.

Prior to this increase in the elderly population, the Japan Dental Association started the 8,000 movement in order to contribute to a more healthy ageing society by helping people over the age of 80 retain at least 20 functional teeth. I think you will agree that the first goal of dentistry is to sustain and enhance oral function until people reach the end of their life.