Does the FDI have an impact in people’s lives? Yes, in quite specific ways, from the dental materials used by the dentist to a number of issues on dental practice and ethics. FDI’s continuing education programs have an impact on the good art of the profession, as do other FDI issues such as waste management in dental practices, guidelines, good practice recommendations and public information messages. All of these together have a tremendous impact on health professionals – but on also patients, both directly and indirectly.

What’s the role of FDI on health and dentistry in a global context? FDI deals directly with the United Nations in a general way, but more specifically with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It is very important to be globally present and to make sure that the interests of the profession, and of the public, are well represented, promoted and defended. We are part of an alliance of non-governmental organizations called the World Health Professions Alliance or WHPA and our recent focus has been in noncommunicable diseases. This issue has come to the surface in the past few years due to the health burden they represent. FDI has fronted the WHPA campaign and recently made very specific recommendations at a Civil Society Hearing in New York. We have also created a health toolkit, which was launched just a few days ago.

Are these recommendations for all health professionals? FDI’s particular goal is to have oral diseases listed as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). The primary principle underscoring the position of FDI and that of its membership in the negotiating process. The motion resolved that “FDI/World Dental Federation as the worldwide, authoritative and independent voice of the dental profession calls on governments to foster and ensure the phase up of effective prevention for dental caries and associated health promotion programmes. This should be linked to preventive disease management, which will result in the phase down of use of current restorative materials, including dental amalgam. These measures will ensure optimal oral health, particularly for those most disadvantaged and in need of treatment.”

The second element of the 2010 GA Motion restated the safety of dental amalgam and that no alternative currently exists: “Amalgam is a safe and highly effective restorative material. To maintain and protect global public health, a phase down of amalgam will be only appropriate when an alternative and suitable restorative material is available.”

El nuevo presidente de FDI, Dr. Orlando Orlando Monteiro da Silva, derecha, con los presidentes de AMIC Dental y de ADM durante la Fiesta Latina de Dental Tribune en la exposición IDS.

FDI’s new President, Dr. Orlando Monteiro da Silva, right, with the presidents of the Mexican expo.

FDI makes a difference in people’s lives

The current WHO list refers only to cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Yet people all over the world – governments, politicians, important bodies like WHO and others – are becoming increasingly aware that oral health is part of general health. Oral health has a huge impact on the general health of individuals and other systemic diseases, especially NCD’s. FDI is working to have this reality reflected in official UN and WHO NCD policy and statements.

What is your personal goal as FDI President? I would like to give more visibility to some Portuguese-speaking countries like Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, East Timor and São Tomé and Príncipe. These countries have tremendous needs in terms of oral health professions and in terms of the oral health needs of the millions of people that live there.

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