

Position Summary

Governments should acknowledge the link between oral health and overall health and develop prevention strategies to reduce common risk factors of non-communicable diseases.

1. Background

- 1.1. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading disease burden worldwide and are responsible for the death of more than 41 million people each year.
- 1.2. In recognition of the importance of NCDs, the United Nations (UN) High-level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases made a significant Political Declaration in September 2011 stating in particular “that renal, oral and eye diseases pose a major health burden for many countries and that these diseases share common risk factors and can benefit from common responses to non-communicable diseases”.
- 1.3. The impact of oral diseases is considerable in terms of pain, impairment of function, reduced quality of life, loss of productivity and cost of treatment.
- 1.4. Common risk factors for NCDs, including oral diseases, are unhealthy diet excessive intake of sugars and acidic foods, tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption. These risk factors are significantly influenced by Social Determinants of Health such as low socio-economic status, rural and remote dwelling, indigenous backgrounds and other special needs groups.
- 1.5. There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating bidirectional links between oral diseases and other NCDs, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain forms of cancer and respiratory diseases.
- 1.6. Significant resources are required to address the inequities in health.
- 1.7. Common risk factors for general and oral diseases will lead to common preventive and treatment strategies.
- 1.8. Additional research is needed to better understand the association between oral and general health.

Definitions

- 1.9. NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES are those that are not transmitted through direct or indirect contact with an infected or afflicted person.
- 1.10. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.

2. Position

- 2.1. Inequalities in health should be addressed.
- 2.2. Governments, policy makers and community leaders must acknowledge the importance of common risk factors that affect oral diseases and other NCDs.
- 2.3. Strategies targeting the prevention and control of the determinants of NCDs must be implemented for optimal oral and general health to be achieved.
- 2.4. Research into the links between oral and general health should be a priority and be used to underpin strategies for the prevention and management of diseases.

2.5. A collaborative approach between all stakeholders is required to reduce the impact of NCDs.

Policy Statement 2.8

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