



FDI POLICY STATEMENT

The association between oral health and general health

**Merging of 'Association between oral, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health (2002)' and 'Dentistry and General Health (1998)'
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Recent increased awareness of the association between oral diseases and systemic diseases has generated interest and hope for a clear understanding of the role of oral health care professionals in the screening and prevention of generalized diseases, as well as to foster understanding among medical professionals regarding the effect systemic disease may have on oral health. Many patients often seek oral health care when they perceive themselves as being healthy. This affords oral health care professionals the opportunity to screen and monitor patients for chronic diseases that have yet to manifest clinical signs and symptoms.

Studies have revealed an association between the presence of oral infections (especially periodontal disease) and systemic diseases, including cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, adverse pregnancy outcomes, diabetes mellitus, pulmonary infections, and different forms of cancer. Intervention studies in small patient samples have generated contrasting outcomes. It is not clear if these results can be generalized to the population at large.

Statement

- It is essential that both medical and oral health care professionals are able to evaluate and understand the implications of studies on the association between oral and systemic diseases.
- While an association between oral and systemic diseases has been established, it remains unclear if a causative relationship exists.
- Given the importance of oral health as a part of general health, both oral health care professionals, patients and the public at large, should strive for optimal oral health.
- Oral diseases may be signs of or serve as indicators of the presence of systemic diseases or conditions.
- Currently, there are no definitive studies to justify specific oral interventions for the prevention of systemic diseases, such as cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, or for reduction of the incidence of adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- Further interdisciplinary intervention studies are necessary to determine if a causative relationship between oral and systemic diseases exists.

References

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2. Glick M. Causation. A Concept Loosely Founded by Epidemiology. J Am Dent Assoc 2007;138:1532-3.
3. Pihlström BL, Michalowicz BS, Johnson NW. Periodontal diseases. Lancet 2005; 366:1809–20.