

Improving Access to Oral Care

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FDI, as the authoritative, professional worldwide organization for dentistry, supports the principle that all communities and people should have access to the best possible oral healthcare to achieve optimum oral health. The dental profession recognizes that the key to the achievement of this objective is improving access to oral healthcare, in particular to deprived, underprivileged communities and people.

Some factors that influence access include financial and social infrastructure, severity and prevalence of oral diseases, changing disease patterns, quality of care, birth rate and ageing populations. Barriers to improving oral healthcare may arise from individuals, society in general, governments, resistance to change and outdated professional philosophies. Lack of perceived need, inadequate resources, uneven distribution of manpower, low prioritization and lack of political will are also barriers to care.

FDI affirms that the barriers must be overcome with strategies based on the following principles:

1. Oral health is an integral part of general health and must be prioritized.
2. Most oral disease is preventable. Cooperation between individuals, the profession, government, non-governmental organizations and the media is essential in oral health education.
3. The adoption of positive attitudes by society and dissemination of accurate information will support initiatives to improve access.
4. A close collaboration between the profession, auxiliaries, allied health professions, appropriate non-dental personnel (e.g. primary healthcare workers) and health education personnel locally, regionally and at global levels will enhance access to appropriate and affordable oral healthcare.
5. Involvement of the community in all levels of planning and provision for their oral healthcare needs.