

PORTUGORALL

Through the acronym of three words - Portugal, Oral, All - I intend to address the pertinence of oral health in my country, Portugal, and at a global level, being more inclusive of all the professions that make it up.

Specifically, I'm referring to dentists, leaders, oral hygienists, and dental technicians: for different reasons, and in different contexts, these are the jobs that work most closely in the oral health team.



Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of the National Association of Liberal Professionals. Former President of the Portuguese Dental Association.

My vast international experience at the helm of the FDI - World Dental Federation, CED - Council of European Dentists and FEDCAR- Federation of Dental Competent Authorities and Regulators makes me confident that this path should be taken further by the main global organizations representing dentistry.



Preface: the growing scientific evidence of the intrinsic relationship between oral and systemic health has caused global health organizations, academia, health professions, regulators, professional organizations, and society in general to reflect.



Patients and their organizations, as well as insurers and public and private funding systems, have taken this integrated approach to oral health into account. Nothing could be more right and proper.

Involving family doctors in the context of the desirable inclusion of oral health in primary health care, in a universal coverage approach, with their collaboration:

- nutritionists, given the widespread sharing and relationship between nutrition and oral health,
- psychologists, now that everyone is aware of the impact and relationship of oral health on mental health and vice versa. In the latter case, it would be enough to take into account the impact of addictions to various substances on oral health;
- also in terms of temporomandibular joint pathology, TMJ, bruxism and occlusal problems and their relationship with physiotherapy, sleep medicine and neurology.

And other collaborations could be identified with nurses, pediatricians, speech therapists, etc. examples of this relationship between oral and systemic health in various areas of health.

But with so much looking around, we're perhaps forgetting to look inwards, at the oral health team with whom we work every day.

Note that the "Global Report on the State of Oral Health: Towards Universal Health Coverage for Oral Health by 2030" presents a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities in the field of oral health globally.



The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights that oral diseases are among the most common non-communicable diseases, affecting approximately 3.5 billion people worldwide. These diseases are, as an obvious result, dental caries, and periodontal disease, which are largely preventable through educational, preventive, and clinical interventions, along with approaches to combat risks common to all chronic diseases.

The report points to the need to include oral health services in publicly funded national health coverage services, accessible free of charge or at a cost that people can afford. In addition, it describes the main determinants and risk factors of oral diseases, including sugar consumption, tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption.

This approach highlights the fact that chronic diseases and some pathologies of the oral cavity share a set of risk factors that can be conditioned or altered.

More specifically, dental caries, the most prevalent disease globally, affects more than 2 billion people.

On the other hand, advanced periodontal disease, with a global prevalence of around 19%, affects more than 1 billion people worldwide.

And edentulism and severe tooth loss has an average global prevalence of almost 7%, with more than 350 million cases identified worldwide.

Oral hygienists, who are true experts in prevention, play an essential role in the prophylactic and educational approach and in oral health literacy.

On the other hand, in the rehabilitation of edentulism and tooth loss, the device developed by Dental Prosthesis Technicians (DPT) is crucial.

As such, while not being exhaustive, because these senior health technicians, OH and DPT, are broader in their professional scope than described collaboration and dialog between dentistry and these oral health jobs is fundamental.

It would be highly advisable to establish permanent contact platforms between these different professional profiles, for the sake of patients and users.

True alliances for oral health.

In conclusion:

Yes, it is essential to look at interprofessional collaboration with other areas of health. It certainly is. But we can't leave behind dialog and interaction with those who work with us every day to prevent, treat and rehabilitate diseases of the oral cavity.

The major international and national organizations that represent and regulate oral health must include the medicine of oral hygienists and dental technicians with dental medicine.

In the name of excellent interdisciplinary oral health: **PortugOrall. ■**