

## FDI POLICY STATEMENT

### Research and Scientific Integrity in Oral Health

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#### CONTEXT

Scientific research is a cornerstone of oral health advancement and addressing the rising global burden of oral diseases. It drives innovation, informs education, and underpins the development of safe, effective, and equitable oral healthcare. In an era of rapid technological and societal change, the role of science in improving population health and strengthening healthcare systems is more critical than ever. Oral health research enables the discovery of new preventive strategies, diagnostic tools, therapies, and models of care that respond to evolving needs.

Across the globe, evidence-based healthcare has emerged as the standard, aligning clinical decision-making with the best available research, clinical expertise, and patient values. Yet research is not immune to carelessness or even malpractice, and the consequences of flawed or biased science can undermine trust, waste resources, and harm patients. That is why the oral health community relies on a dynamic and trustworthy scientific ecosystem. The latter should encourage excellence, relevance, transparency, and integrity in the creation and application of knowledge.

#### SCOPE

FDI reaffirms its commitment to advancing oral health through research. This policy statement provides recommendations to nurture a global research environment that is inclusive, collaborative, and ethical. It should also be designed to produce knowledge that benefits patients, practitioners, and healthcare systems, improving oral health outcomes, informing policy, and supporting evidence-based care. It is directed toward researchers and research institutions, including funders, educators, industry, and consumers of research including clinicians, patients, policymakers, and the wider public.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Predatory journals:** Publications that claim to be legitimate scholarly journals but misrepresent their publishing practices<sup>1</sup>.

**Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR Principles):** Guidelines to ensure data are FAIR, facilitating transparency and reproducibility in science<sup>2</sup>.

#### PRINCIPLES

FDI affirms the following principles in support of oral health research:

- **Value of science:** Scientific research is essential to improving oral health, reducing disparities, and optimizing care delivery. It is a public good that contributes to better patient outcomes, informed health systems, and resilient communities.
- **Evidence-based practice:** High-quality research is the foundation of evidence-based healthcare and enables practitioners to deliver care that is safe, effective, and tailored to patient needs.
- **Ethics and integrity:** All research must uphold the highest ethical standards and be subject to oversight by recognized ethics committees. Scientific integrity safeguards trust in research and protects patients, participants, and the profession.
- **Collaboration and inclusion:** Research benefits from diverse perspectives and shared knowledge. It requires cooperation and collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and countries to accelerate discovery and ensure global relevance.
- **Sustainability and impact:** Scientific systems should prioritize quality, reproducibility, and social benefit. The value of research lies not only in publication, but in its ability to improve practice, shape policy, impact oral health and well-being, and serve society.

## POLICY

### FDI:

- reaffirms the importance of research as essential to advancing oral health and strengthening healthcare systems. Research should be adequately funded, strategically prioritized, and designed to address both basic understanding and real-world needs.
- encourages national and international agencies to recognize the impact of oral diseases on health, well-being, and quality of life, and establish sustainable, targeted funding mechanisms commensurate with their burden.
- supports good scientific practice. Researchers must uphold honesty, transparency, accountability, patient safety, and respect. They should ensure integrity of the research process from its conception to its publication and adhere to legal and ethical standards.
- supports the conduct of high-quality clinical trials in oral health as essential to advancing safe, effective, and evidence-based care. All trials should adhere to internationally recognized standards, including Good Clinical Practice (GCP). This includes registration, systematic reporting, and adherence to existing standards, e.g. those of the Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research Network (<https://www.equator-network.org>) .
- encourages the timely integration of research into clinical practice, including practice-based and implementation research, using replicable and patient- or healthcare-relevant outcomes.
- encourages the inclusion of research in the undergraduate curriculum and mechanisms to promote and encourage the development of early career researchers.
- prioritizes research with high population and public health impact, including research on accessibility and equity of care, as well as common risk factors of oral and systemic conditions and the integration of oral health into primary healthcare.

- supports the development of research infrastructure, including registries, data platforms, and analytic tools that facilitate collaboration, reproducibility, and innovation.
- encourages open science practices, including data sharing, open peer review, and adherence to reporting standards and the FAIR principles, while respecting intellectual property and related feasibility constraints.
- promotes equitable and inclusive research practices that ensure fair representation of underserved and underrepresented populations and strengthen research capacity in low- and middle-income countries.
- promotes the inclusion of oral health research within general health research.
- warns against the influence of low-quality or predatory publishing practices and urges institutions and researchers to establish incentives for prioritizing high-quality research over quantity.
- endorses fair and responsible research evaluation, to recognize quality and relevance over quantity. Researchers should be rewarded for transparency, collaboration, and societal impact, as well as participation in peer review.
- encourages National Dental Associations and health authorities to support or initiate research programs and policies aligned with these principles.
- encourages the development of national oral health research strategies and investment into research workforce according to contextualized national priorities.

## **KEYWORDS**

Evidence-based dentistry, open science, peer review, research integrity, scientific publishing.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The information in this policy was based on the best available scientific evidence at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socio-economic factors.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Elmore, S.A. and E.H Weston, Predatory Journals: What They Are and How to Avoid Them. *Toxicol Pathol*, 2020. 48(4): p.607-610. doi: 10.1177/0192623320920209. Epub 2020 Apr 22. PMID: 32319351; PMCID: PMC7237319.
2. Wilkinson, M.D., et al., The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. *Scientific Data*, 2016: 3:160018. doi: 10.1038/s41597-019-0009-6. PMID: 26978244; PMCID: PMC4792175.