FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Continuing Dental Education

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CONTEXT

Continuing education and professional development are professional obligations for dentists and dental associations, due to advances in science and research, the need to incorporate new knowledge to best manage oral health and diseases, technological developments and innovation affecting dentistry, increasing interaction between other health professions, better understanding of the bilateral relationship between oral health and general health, patient safety, quality of life, standards of care, evidence based dentistry, emerging public health challenges, and the needs, demands and expectations of individual patients and the global population.

SCOPE

Continuing dental education (CDE) is a professional and ethical obligation for dentists, oral health care professionals, and National Dental Associations. Dental professionals have a responsibility to continuously learn through education. Every dentist should be informed and involved in the development of dentistry, evaluate new research and the available strongest scientific evidence, apply reflective and critical thinking in ways that best incorporate new techniques into practice, improve care in line with current professional standards, and serve the public. Career-long professional development improves awareness of appropriate care and strengthens the individual's commitment to public health. The dental profession is committed to maintaining high quality, evidence-based, and contemporary education and training standards to serve patients and the public.

DEFINITION

Continuing dental education applies to both general dentists and dental specialists, and is the means by which members of the profession maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop personal and professional qualities required throughout their careers. CDE is also meant to provide a more public- and patient-focused approach to prevent oral diseases, rather than solely treating existing disease. It aims to include the refinement of existing knowledge and skills, as well as the consideration, appropriate evaluation, and application of new developments and scientific research within the scope of dentistry.

Well-planned CDE and professional development assist dentists in recognizing their individual areas of interest and proficiency, their limitations, new opportunities for improving skills and competencies, and the need to refer patients for advice and/or treatment to appropriate specialists.

PRINCIPLES

The primary principles of CDE are that the dental profession responds to changing public needs, understands and uses best available practices with new techniques and knowledge, and allows practitioners to provide service for the prevention and successful management of oral diseases.

POLICY

FDI calls on National Dental Associations to:

- Regularly update the dental profession's commitment to preventing diseases, providing appropriate treatment of oral diseases, and promoting public oral health.
- Advocate for the availability of a structured and ongoing educational system for all dentists, within an ethical framework.
- Suggest the nature, content and amount of CDE that is reasonable and attainable by dentists in their region, including new and innovative models of education and development.
- Recommend that CDE courses include medical topics, allowing practicing dentists to upgrade their competency in medical knowledge and their understanding of the bilateral relationship between oral health and general health.
- Assist the appropriate regulatory agencies in advocating the requirements of CDE.
- Recommend a system capable of regularly evaluating the courses by an audit in terms of quality, content and participation.
- Support a broadened scope of practice for dentists and an expanded role for improving the well-being of the community.

This statement should be read in conjunction with FDI's policy statement on Basic Dental Education and the supportive references.

DISCLAIMER

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

KEYWORDS

Continuing dental education, dental education, educational system, education standards, evaluation and adaptation of new technologies

REFERENCES

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