Sustainability in Dentistry

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CONTEXT

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [1] adopted in 2015, established 17 goals to stimulate efforts over the coming years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. Dentistry is an important part of human life and is committed to integrating sustainable development goals into daily practice and supporting a shift to a green economy [2] in the pursuit of healthy lives and well-being for all through all stages of life.

A management system is needed to enable dentists and dental organizations to implement science-based practices that enhance, in terms of sustainability, their performance and effectiveness. [3]

Oral health professionals recognize the importance of collaborating in the interests of sustainability. They take responsibility for meeting the demands of society to reduce their impact on natural resources at the same time as promoting optimal oral health for all people.

The concept of sustainable development [4] is based on three main pillars: the environment, the economy and society. The promotion of good oral health habits and the access of all people to health services together make a significant contribution to the welfare of populations around the world and could also contribute to achieving environmental goals as well as enhancing inclusive, productive and healthy lives.

In addition to the oral health team, Sustainability in Dentistry involves many stakeholders who all have a role to play, including scientists, educators, manufacturers, distributors, dental equipment technicians, and waste collectors and processors. FDI and National Dental Associations are important channels for coordinating work and interacting with local authorities to advocate and facilitate activities related to sustainable development.

DEFINITIONS

Sustainable development: Development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. [4]

Green economy: Green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. [2]

Sustainability: The property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise can be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources. [1]
PRINCIPLES

Dentistry must be practiced ethically, with high levels of quality and safety, in the pursuit of optimal oral health. Sustainability integrates a broader commitment of the oral health professional to social and environmental responsibility. The right of future generations to a world with adequate natural resources must be respected.

POLICY

• The dentist as leader of the dental team should adopt actions to educate all staff on the culture of sustainability.
• Dentistry should consider the environment when deciding on a single-use, disposable or reusable product, without compromising patient safety and quality of care.
• Dentistry should reduce the consumption of energy, water, paper and any materials which could be harmful to environment, as well as emissions to air and releases to water.
• Toxic residues and hazardous wastes should be managed and handled in compliance with local and national guidelines and regulations to minimize their impact on the health of people and the environment.
• The dental industry should apply principles of sustainability to dental product lifecycles.
• Oral health stakeholders should collaborate in the urgent development of more sustainable dental materials and technologies.
• National authorities should stimulate research on the environmental impact of dental practice so that oral health professionals can understand, monitor and report the impact of their actions.
• The use of low-power and low-pollution technologies should be promoted, along with research leading to their development.
• NDAs and other related dental organizations (e.g. FDI regional organizations and NDA branches) should ensure their activities and operations are based on principles of sustainability.
• The prevention of oral diseases and the promotion of health should be recognized as the most sustainable way to ensure optimal, accessible and affordable oral health with minimal impact on the environment.
• FDI and NDAs should be encouraged to integrate the concept of sustainable development into their continuing education activities.

KEYWORDS

Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Dentistry, Green Dentistry

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.
REFERENCES


