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Xerostomia in Need of Mouthwatering Solutions: Prospects for Future Therapies

Alexandria, VA, USA – A symposium investigating the principles and techniques used to treat xerostomia caused by salivary gland dysfunction was presented at the 104th General Session of the IADR, which was held in conjunction with the 55th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research and the 50th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Dental Research on March 25-28, 2026 in San Diego, CA, USA.

Xerostomia or “dry mouth” is a disorder affecting one out of five people, with ~40% of individuals over 55 years of age experiencing some kind of oral dryness symptoms. However, it is often an underdiagnosed and ignored medical condition. Dry mouth has multiple causes, the most common being medications, radio-, immuno- and chemotherapy in cancer patients and autoimmune conditions like Sjögren’s disease (a complex autoimmune condition affecting mostly females), but it could be a consequence of a variety of other factors or different infectious or systemic diseases.

Xerostomia affects basic activities like eating, swallowing, talking, on top of diminished self-esteem, embarrassment, significantly decreased quality of life, and depression. The current therapeutic options are mainly palliative. There are only two FDA-approved medications: pilocarpine and cevimeline, both muscarinic receptor agonists. Unfortunately, these drugs have multiple side effects limiting their utility.

This symposium brought together researchers from cell biology, tissue engineering, and regenerative medicine fields to present their most recent advances and current clinical findings. It helped attendees to understand the principles and techniques used to restore damaged salivary gland function and provide new regenerative therapy for patients with salivary gland dysfunction, including gene therapy, bioengineering approaches, and neuromimetics.

Organized by Ioana Ghita, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Bethesda, MD, USA, the symposium, “Xerostomia in Need of Mouthwatering Solutions: Prospects for Future Therapies” took place on Saturday, March 28 at 8 a.m. PDT (UTC-7).

About IADR/AADOOCR

The International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (IADR) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to drive dental, oral, and craniofacial research for health and well-being worldwide. IADR represents the individual scientists, clinician-scientists, dental professionals, and students based in academic, government, non-profit, and private-sector institutions who share our mission. The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOOCR) is the largest division of IADR. Learn more at www.iadr.org.

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