

Interactive Multistakeholder Hearing for the Fourth UN High- Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health

Panel 1: Tackling the determinants of noncommunicable diseases and mental health and well-being through multisectoral and effective governance and collaborative action

The International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research and the FDI World Dental Federation, representing over 10,000 researchers and 1 million dentists respectively, thank the Chair for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

To accelerate the NCD and mental health agenda, we urge Member States to recognize oral health as an integral, yet long-neglected component of this conversation. Oral diseases affect 3.7 billion people worldwide and disproportionately impact vulnerable and marginalized communities. They share the same social and commercial, determinants including unhealthy nutrition, tobacco and alcohol use, poverty, and inequities in access to care. Additionally, joint prevention is possible through a multisectoral response and evidence-based cost-effective interventions. Yet oral health is absent from most national NCD strategies and global frameworks.

The WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan offers a powerful blueprint for change, emphasizing the need to embed oral health into universal health coverage and broader NCD strategies. But progress will require strong political commitment, multisectoral governance, and clear financing mechanisms. Prioritizing oral health within health surveillance systems and cross-sectoral platforms for NCDs is a win for all.

Oral health is essential for overall health. Poor oral health contributes to school and work absenteeism, limits employability, worsens mental health, undermines dignity, and reinforces cycles of poverty. Evidence from the Global Burden of Disease study

confirms a steep social gradient in oral diseases, with the greatest burden falling on those already disadvantaged. To achieve equity, governance mechanisms across sectors including education, labor, trade, and social protection, must explicitly include oral health.

We call on Member States to deliver on their commitments to the WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan and more recently to the Bangkok Declaration on Oral Health by addressing oral diseases within national NCD strategies and allocating resources proportionate to their burden. Importantly, research institutions and civil society must be meaningfully engaged, and oral health professionals recognized as essential partners in NCD policy implementation and accountability mechanisms.

Because, there is no successful NCD agenda and no true mental well-being without oral health.

Thank you.

Duration: 2 mins 45 secs.
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