

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

Panel 2: Reshaping and strengthening health systems and all forms of financing to meet the needs of people living with and at risk of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions.

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.

As Member States work to reshape and strengthen health systems to respond to the NCD and mental health crisis, it is imperative that oral health be included as a core component of this transformation. Oral diseases are the most prevalent global health conditions, affecting 3.7 billion people. They share common risk factors with other NCDs, contribute to disability, pain, and poor quality of life, and significantly affect mental health and social well-being.

Despite these facts, oral health remains largely excluded from health system financing, workforce planning, and universal health coverage reforms. This must change.

We urge Member States to align national financing strategies with the WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan, and to design benefit packages that include essential oral health services, particularly prevention and treatment for vulnerable populations. Without this, the vision of health for all will remain incomplete.

Improving oral healthcare enhances optimal management of NCDs. Therefore, financing efforts must also support the integration of oral health into primary care by ensuring access to essential oral healthcare at primary care level, and prioritizing oral

health within research systems and innovation pipelines. Oral health professionals play a key role in delivering multidisciplinary care that NCD patients often need. They should be key stakeholders in planning and implementing NCD interventions

At the same time, investments in oral health research, data systems, and surveillance are urgently needed to inform cost-effective care models, identify and close equity gaps, and evaluate integrated policy approaches within broader NCD and mental health strategies. The oral health research community stands ready to support these goals.

Finally, financing reform must be equity-driven. People living in poverty, in rural areas, and in humanitarian settings experience the highest burden of untreated oral disease and the lowest access to care. Reforms must close, not widen these gaps. Because a reimagined health system that excludes oral health is not strong, equitable, or inclusive.

Thank you.

Duration: 3 mins.

345 words, 2040 characters.