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MONACO/MADRID, Spain/CHICAGO, USA: Periodontal disease is a major public health issue that should be addressed increasingly by the medical and dental communities, the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) and the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) have stated in a joint manifesto. In order to convey this message to more dentists, the EFP recently launched an international awareness campaign aimed at more than 500,000 professionals in Europe.

Kicked off at the recent international symposium of the Swiss Osteology Foundation in Monaco in May, the Outreach Campaign aims to highlight both the relationship between periodontal and systemic diseases, as well as the importance of periodontitis prevention. According to the manifesto, which has been available on the organisation’s website since March, there is convincing evidence from a large number of studies that periodontitis may increase the risk of developing diabetes or cardiovascular disease, and may lead to adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth or low birth weight. Other systemic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or certain kinds of cancers are also thought to be influenced by periodontal inflammation.

In light of this evidence, dental professionals will have to fundamentally change the perception of their responsibilities as providers of general health, the manifesto states. Multidisciplinary approaches through collaboration between dental and medical communities, as well as within the dental communities, will have to be developed further to meet future patients’ needs.

The content of the manifesto is based on recommendations made during a joint EFP/AAP workshop, which took place in Spain in November last year and drew 38 experts in the field. The workshop was held under the leadership of Prof. Mariano Sanz from Spain, Maurizio Tonetti from Italy, and Niklas Lang from the University of Hong Kong’s Faculty of Dentistry. Among other measures, it recommends thorough periodontal evaluation of patients presenting with signs of systematic diseases by dentists. It also calls for more clinical trials and studies researching the effects of periodontal therapy on several disease factors in different populations in order to obtain additional reliable scientific data on these issues.

Besides the manifesto, the campaign will provide information through regularly updated online dossiers, video documentaries and other promotional activities. A seven-minute clip was presented to the public in Monaco and is already available on video-sharing platforms like YouTube.

In addition to the EFP member associations, the campaign has received support from dental consumers’ provider Colgate-Palmolive’s GABA and other professional dental bodies. Owing to these partnerships, the campaign will be presented at most of the national member events throughout the year, the organisation said. More information about the Outreach Campaign is available on a dedicated website perionetwork.efp.org.

The EFP currently consists of 28 national periodontal associations that boast a combined membership of over 15,000 professionals. Besides publishing the Journal of Clinical Periodontology, it hosts the triannual EuroPerio congress. The next edition of this event will take place in London in 2015.