



Dr. Deborah Stymiest

A Global Perspective on the Profession

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In September, I had the privilege of heading CDA's delegation at this year's FDI Annual World Dental Congress in Stockholm, Sweden. The FDI World Dental Federation is the authoritative voice of the global dental profession, composed of 191 member associations representing over 1 million dentists from 135 countries worldwide. FDI champions democratic ideals and all member associations have an equal voice regardless of their size or relative ability to contribute financially to the organization.

FDI's vision reflects a challenging yet noble aspiration: “Leading the world to optimal oral health.” The organization strives for prevention as a universally applied concept and for an increase in access to safe and affordable oral health care worldwide. Through partnerships with member associations, world government bodies and the oral health industry, FDI works to achieve the international reach necessary to attain its goals and make meaningful improvements to global oral health.

Canada has earned the highest respect within FDI. Our delegates have established a strong legacy as valued contributors in the development of FDI policy statements, which are used by our colleagues across the world on scientific, clinical and ethical matters. These policy statements are developed through a worldwide exchange of knowledge, evidence and experiences in dental health matters and are invaluable resources for FDI member associations that would otherwise be unable to develop similar guidelines. I believe it is crucial for Canada to continue to play an active role in this global knowledge exchange.

I also believe that dentists in Canada can be proud of the efforts of current FDI president Dr. Burton Conrod of Sydney, Nova Scotia. As Dr. Conrod completes his final year as president, he continues to demonstrate outstanding leader-

ship and extraordinary dedication and commitment to the profession. Both he and his wife, Dr. Connie Conrod, have earned the respect of those within FDI for their tireless efforts to improve global oral health. The Conrods are a fine example of Canadian dentists truly making a difference on a global scale.

The FDI Congress provides CDA with an ideal forum to meet with dental leaders from a range of countries, to share ideas, discuss challenges and propose solutions. In Stockholm, our delegation had the opportunity to engage in valuable discussions with representatives from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and Germany. These meetings helped to reinforce our ongoing relationships with these like-minded organizations and facilitate the exchange of information and ideas on addressing the challenges we face collectively as a profession.

It became clear during these discussions that access to care remains the greatest issue facing the profession worldwide. Answers to this complex problem will only be found by coming together as a profession. Optimal oral health is not an issue isolated to a single community or country, but is a concern shared by all dentists. We may sometimes feel that addressing this issue is daunting in Canada, but consider the Republic of Sierra Leone, where there are just 9 dentists trying to meet the oral health needs of over 5.5 million of its citizens!

As a profession, we must ensure that we look globally and do our part to address the great inequities that exist around the world in terms of oral health. Not only is optimal oral health essential to general health and overall well-being, FDI and the World Health Organization formally recognized good oral health as a basic human right when the 2 groups signed the Nairobi Declaration on Oral Health in Africa in 2004.

FDI requires ongoing support from professional associations such as CDA in order to continue playing a significant role in leading the world toward optimal oral health. I believe that Canadian dentists must also continue to be active participants in this global dental family and recognize that it is not what divides us that matters, but what connects us as a profession that really counts.

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