

FDI calls for measuring health rather than disease

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“What health surveys have been concerned with isn’t so much health, but it’s the level of disease that’s in a society... now need to stand back and reflect carefully and develop a completely new set of markers that truly measure health and don’t simply measure disease.”

This remark, taken from a 2013 interview with FDI Science Committee Vice Chair Prof. David Williams on the philosophy behind Vision 2020, inspired a recent FDI public statement on how oral health integrates into Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages’.

SDGs and the oral health definition

The context also provided an opportunity to draw attention to the new definition of oral health, which in the words of the Vision 2020 Think Tank Co-Chairs Michael Glick and David Williams who drove this activity on behalf of FDI, “focuses on health rather than disease and addresses the physiological, social and psychological attributes that are essential to maintaining a good quality of life and general well-being rather than looking at disease and condition status alone.”

FDI’s approach strongly supports the concept of lifelong health and ‘health in all policies’, and ultimately supports the SDGs. The focus becomes policy measures to promote and improve health and switches from the cost of intervening or the cost of doing nothing, engaging all sectors.

Ministerial level

FDI made the statement to health ministers and officials from Member States gathered at the [140th Executive Board of the World Health Organization](#), during debate focusing on progress in the implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (Agenda 2030).

Agenda 2030 comprises 17 SDGs, otherwise known as Global Goals with 169 targets in total. The goals are interconnected – often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another. The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 and include important health monitoring procedures to be implemented at the global, regional, and national level.

SDG 3 and its relevance to oral health

SDG 3 addresses all major health priorities, including reproductive, maternal and child health; communicable, non-communicable and environmental diseases; universal health coverage; and access for all to safe, effective, quality and affordable medicines and vaccines. It also calls for more research and development, increased health financing, and strengthened capacity of all countries in health risk reduction and management.

FDI's statements seek to ensure that the oral health dimension is included in WHO reports and policies. FDI was first recognized by WHO in 1948 as the only representative international body in the field of Odonto-Stomatology and has been in official relations ever since. This makes FDI one of WHO's oldest partners and assures FDI a permanent advisory role in matters pertaining to oral health.