



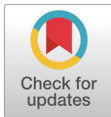
## Special Article

## A new beginning and development plans for the Korean Society of Dental Hygiene

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The global health crisis has persisted, as the whole world faced an unexpected challenge in 2020. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which broke out last year has reminded humankind once again of the importance of health. Numerous studies have revealed that in general, oral health is a critical determinant to health, thus, heightening the importance of oral health more than ever [1].

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social determinants of health as: The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels [2]. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities—the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries [2].

Oral diseases are a matter of global public health and can be summarized into core messages as follows [3].

- Oral health is an integral element of overall health and well-being, enabling essential daily functions.
- Oral diseases include a range of chronic clinical conditions that effect the teeth and mouth, including dental caries, periodontal disease and oral cancers.
- Despite being largely preventable, oral diseases are highly prevalent conditions, affecting more than 3.5 billion people around the world.
- Oral diseases disproportionately affect poorer and marginalized groups in society, being closely linked to socioeconomic status and broader social determinants of health.
- Oral diseases have substantial effects, causing pain, sepsis, reduced quality of life, lost school days and decreased work productivity, and the costs of dental treatment can be considerable for both the individual and the wider healthcare system.

• Oral conditions share common risks with other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including free sugars consumption, tobacco use, and harmful use of alcohol, as well as the wider social and commercial determinants of health.

The role of dental hygienists as oral health experts is expanding due to the growing importance of oral health management for improving the quality of a healthy and happy life. In many countries, the scope of dental hygiene activities is being cultivated via evolving legislations and policies [4].

After the introduction of the dental hygienist system in 1965, dental hygienists-related organizations in Korea have been making various efforts over the past 50 years to improve the awareness and status of dental hygienists and protect their rights and interests [5,6]. In particular, as the number of researchers with master's and doctorate degrees among dental hygienists increases, the role of the academic society which serves as a center for research is also increasing. The Korean Society of Dental Hygiene (KSDH) was initially named as the "Korean Academy of Oral Health Promotion" when it was founded in 2000, but changed its name to KSDH in 2010. Its sole purpose is to "contribute to national oral health through academic studies on dental hygiene education and oral health promotion and active interaction among society members." and it has now grown into a society which outnumbers any other, in the field of dental hygiene.

Although KSDH's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 had to be commemorated rather modestly due to COVID-19, we nonetheless promised a new beginning by reflecting on the steps KSDH has taken, shedding light on the direction which dental hygiene education and research are taking, and designing its future vision. In particular, we could affirm that achievements in the dental hygiene education and research field have proved to be outstanding, both quantitatively and qualitatively, after conducting an analysis on the themes hitherto lectured, and the overall status of the lectures held at the conferences in the course of publishing "The 20 Years of the Korean Society of Dental Hygiene" [7].

The number of research articles published until now in the Journal of Korean Society of Dental Hygiene (JKSDH) has been 1,470, which is the largest achievement amongst the domestic dental hygiene journals. JKSDH covers diverse issues from oral health-related themes to curriculum for dental hygiene education, or ways to enhance expertise for dental hygienists. In addition, more and more research is being funded and in-depth researches in response to new technologies and cultures emerging under the influence of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution are gradually making their appearance.

The WHO Oral Health Programme is currently implementing a three-year roadmap (2019-2021) comprising a mix of normative work and practical support to countries through five priority activities [8]. A top priority is the development of the WHO Global Oral Health Report, due to be launched in the second quarter of 2021. Targeting policy and decision-makers, the report will describe the burden, challenges and priority actions to renew global commitment to improve oral health within the noncommunicable disease and universal health coverage agendas [8].

In line with this changing healthcare trend, KSDH has developed a new logo symbolizing "academic activities for dental hygiene education and research" to celebrate its 20-year history, a whole new beginning in 2021, and all the developments that will unfold. Furthermore, in accordance

with its vision for creating a “Global Society based on Challenge and Creativity”, it has established the following four strategic goals: 1) Support academic research related to human oral health, 2) Create evidence-based academic values based on dental hygiene education and research, 3) Expand international research interactions to foster learning that keeps pace with the world, and 4) Support and expand academic fields and convergent studies, which try to meet the demand of the times.

To accomplish the strategic goals listed above, the field of dental hygiene education and research must build an environment in which, not only the experienced researchers, but also the newly emerging scholars, can communicate freely and be creative. KSDH will reinforce support as well as expand opportunities for academic interactions so that its goals can be realized, and it can develop into an academic society with the best expertise in the field of dental hygiene.

KSDH always aspires for a bright and beautiful world where everyone can live in harmony.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

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