



Opinion Corner

## Reflections on the social responsibility of the oral health profession, particularly the Academy of Dentistry International

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Academy of Dentistry International (ADI) is an International Honor Society for doctors of oral health, which was founded in 1974 to promote social responsibility, which is the founding concept of Albert Wasserman, DDS, of San Mateo, California, U.S.A. This transnational organization is devoted to the sponsorship of oral patient care along with the advancement of Oral Health. This Academy directly aids in the improvement of the oral health and the overall wellbeing of people worldwide.

California in the 60's to the mid 70's when ADI was founded and registered was the nucleus for "human freedom" for better living.

In 2014-2015, the ADI became affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information as an NGO (Non Governmental Organization.)

The International College of Dentists (ICD) is "Honoring the World's Leading Dentists" since 1920! The world then was different. The 1920's prohibition in America, Wall Street crash.

In 1936, Dr. Elmer S. Best, a Minnesota dentist founded the Pierre Fauchard Academy (PFA) "To recognize and grow leaders in the dental profession."

Since 1974, ADI carries the torch of Social Responsibility of the Dental Profession. In 2019, key terms are IT, Information technology and AI, Artificial Intelligence.

Bits and Bytes, in a fraction of a second, go around the globe. On the internet, at the click of a button information science papers, knee-jerk reactions, errors, and mistakes can be let loose in seconds. This contribution is written in Germany, reviewed in India, published in the United States.

In 1974, the world population was 4.00 billion and in 2019 7.7 billion! In 1974, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted more than 320,000 refugees who benefited from UNHCR regular assistance programs, the majority of them in Africa.

UNHCRs annual Global Trends Report – released on June 19, 2019 – shows that nearly 70.8 million people were displaced at the end of 2018. Some 13.6 million people were newly displaced during the course of the year.

What about the oral care needs of the refugees? Who takes care of this cohort, children, adolescents, and the elderly?

*Médecins sans frontières* [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org) was founded in 1971, in the aftermath of the Biafra secession, by a small group of French doctors and journalists who sought to expand accessibility

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to medical care across national boundaries and irrespective of race, religion, creed, or political affiliation. To that end, the organization emphasizes “independence and impartiality,” and explicitly precludes political, economic, or religious factors in its decision-making. For these reasons, it limits the amount of funding received from governments or intergovernmental organizations. These principles have allowed MSF to speak freely with respect to acts of war, corruption and other hindrances to medical care or human well-being.

*Médecins sans frontières* today is a global entity, not to say household word for social responsibility.

Looking at oral health, the dentistry scene is making enormous efforts, initiated and managed by national dental organizations and also particularly hundreds, thousands of individual dentists, most of them with a strong philanthropic motivation to serve, to help treat those who are not reached by organized dentistry. All those actions and mission of social responsibility globally annually account to a double-digit million US\$ amount. Yet, nothing is achieved that would match or compare with the standing and reputation of the *Médecins sans frontières*, respectively, “*Doctors without Borders*,” the voice heard at the United Nations, at the World Health Organization (WHO) along with acceptance in politics, among heads of states and civil society at large.

What comes to mind is that dentistry seem to be the perfect example of the *Chaos theorem*: Henri Poincaré, a mathematician stated “many complex systems can be better understood through the lens of Chaos Theory.” He was the first to point out that many deterministic systems display a “sensitive dependence on initial conditions.”

*Poincaré described this concept in the following way: “It may happen that small differences in the initial conditions produce very great ones in the final phenomena.*

*A small error in the former will produce an enormous error in the latter. Prediction becomes impossible.”*

Idealism, the philanthropy of individual dental associations or small organized groups, by individual practice owners feeling committed about social responsibility are drops on the hot stone. In today’s organized, administered world, International Standards Organisation (ISO) published the Social responsibility standard ISO 2600: [www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html](http://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html)

ISO 26000 provides guidance on how businesses and organizations can operate in a socially responsible way. This means acting in an ethical and transparent way that contributes to the health and welfare of society.

Ethics and Transparency in the first step mean any mission or oral health camp should be administered and coordinated with the local authorities in charge, in general such as the

ministry of health and the national association for oral health.

When ICD/PFA/ADI were founded, “social responsibility” had a different meaning than today, where philanthropy, collegiality mainly is a “silo function.”

Eco-Dentistry, published in the U.K. recently had an titled “corporate social responsibility in dental practice.” That article even mentions Return on Investment, which indeed is there.

ADI Missions are based on the principals of:

- Assessment: What is available, required
- Sustainability: Guaranteed for 5 years, longevity (help for self-help)
- Measurability: Oral Health betterment of the determined cohorts.

Such clear focus and terms are what the generation “Y” (born 1980–1993) in the midst of their lifespan, sponsors, and management of leading global industry trading companies responsible to the shareholders is expecting.

The United Nations focuses on Sustainable Goals to improve, ensure healthy lives, and promote well-being for all at all ages, UN Sustainable Development Goal 3. More information about the UN 17 SDG goals is available under this link: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

ADI since July 2015 is the only and sole honorary oral health association with UN NGO DPI consultative status:

The NGO DPI Executive Committee is comprised of 18 representatives elected by organizations officially associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). The Executive Committee was founded to promote a closer working relationship between the UN and NGOs associated with UN DPI and acts as a liaison between the NGO community and UN. In partnership with the UN DPI, the Executive Committee organizes the annual UN DPI NGO conference at the UN Headquarters or abroad, which increases public understanding of the United Nations critical efforts on issues of human rights, economic and social development, the environment, the rule of law, and peacebuilding. This event is an important opportunity for NGOs to network and promote the efforts of their organizations.

ADI also has United Nations ECOSOC, Economic and Social Council consultative status. A high level forum on sustainable development for follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

The ADI calls on all member states to recognize oral diseases as:

- Major social, economic, and developmental burdens on society and national development
- An indicator of common risk factors predisposing to other

- NCDs largely preventable through controlled actions
- Against added and non-intrinsic sugars in all forms, including taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages
- Against the use of all forms of tobacco
- Including access to safe water for use in daily oral hygiene practices
- Appropriate availability and use of fluoride agents such as toothpaste and drinking water.

### UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING (HLM)

On September 23, 2019, a high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage will be held at the United Nations General Headquarters in New York. The meeting, “Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World,” will bring together heads of state, political and health leaders, policymakers, and universal health coverage champions to advocate health for all.

ADI leading a group of four voluntary associations is accredited to speak at the United Nations HLM Meeting, September 2019 in New York.

Academy of Dentistry International Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders



Unspoken Smiles Foundation



Miracle Corners of the World



### Sustainability

Short term one-time voluntary missions, often by scarcely qualified individuals or small groups characterized as “Helicopter Dentistry that flies to make dust disappear” is not of any help in this regard.

### ADI foundation

The ADI foundation board members are seasoned international health-care professionals and educators with public and private health-care expertise [Figure 1].

The board has also selected industry members to provide a 3<sup>rd</sup> party review of key processes and a continuing reinvention of the foundation’s accountabilities and responsibilities. Given the foundation board’s combined worth and value, it is seeking sources of funds beyond that which the ADI members can contribute. These additional funds will expand the value of the support offered targeted projects and speed with which health care is locally effective to the underserved.

### Measurability

Management thinker Peter Drucker: “You can’t manage what you can’t measure”!



Figure 1: Academy of Dentistry International convocation that was held in San Francisco in 2007.

WHO in many parts of the world, local representatives closely cooperating with national authorities try to strengthen, give oral health the status it deserves as essential for general health. ADI camps and missions collaborate closely with WHO and its local representatives to effectively coordinate oral health promotion and oral disease prevention, to achieve statistically backed measurable results. In 2015, ADI adopted the Tokyo declaration on dental care and oral health for healthy longevity to call on health policymakers and professionals to significantly reduce the global disease burden, promote greater equity, and integrate oral health promotion into the NCD prevention and control and development agenda.

ADI, president, executive council, section chairs, regents and chapter chairs, elected by more than 2800 fellows spread over the globe is truly a global community, which freely and willingly gives its time for the betterment of oral health in all four corners of the globe to all those left behind or cannot be reached by organized dentistry.

“Social Responsibility” as the core when ICD/PFA/ADI was founded had a different meaning than today (mainly collegiality as “silo function”). The baby boomers (1946-64) appreciate this kind of social responsibility. The Generation “Y” (1981-96), also known as the “Millenials” by sociologists.

Are called generation “Me” like to be recognized as “achievers” and are no “silo thinkers” who want to know what I can achieve within the profession, my family to make a difference!”



In this regard, the wisely and progressively developed ADI affiliation and influence with various United Nations

departments like no other honorary society pays dividends for the individual ADI fellow at large. In many countries, ADI is registered with charity status.

The charity status often is linked, which varies from country to country, with greater public recognition, financial, and taxation benefit attractiveness for donors and sponsors.

The German Government through GIZ, Society for International Cooperation signed with ADI a 3 years collaboration project in Uganda at the conurbation of Kaberamaido to provide oral health care for 60,000 school children including literacy for the school teachers. The project is under the auspices and headed by Professor Dr. Thomas Wolf, University of Bern, Switzerland in close collaboration with the Uganda Dental Association. Progress reports will be regularly published on the ADI URL: [www.adint.org](http://www.adint.org) The dental practice reputation among patients, colleagues, builds on a particularly relationship between doctor and patient also the auxiliary staff, e.g. hygienist. Not uncommon in many instances over a lifespan sometimes over generation. An observation on this special relationship: ADI fellowship, “social responsibility” pays dividend: Dividend about the patient mouth to mouth positive marketing. How socially responsible the practice feels and acts?

In today’s world’s ‘tweeting’ communications, spreading news within seconds around the world, this has become something like a global village.

The Journal of Global Oral Health is the communications platform, vehicle exchange expertise and knowledge for the oral health profession at large in the continuance to foster and grow social responsibility to open-access to oral care to the underprivileged but not limited to.

ADI’s experts with an expertise in conjunction with voluntary missions in remote areas focus on a wide array of themes: Providing clean water under adverse conditions with PAUL (Public Aqua Unit Lifesaving) developed at the University of

Kassel by Professor Franz-Bernd Frechen. Several thousand PAULs are as we speak currently saving lives around the globe.

Known experts with teaching and practice background freely and willingly under often adverse conditions promote oral health literacy for children, adolescents, the growing number of elderly in all societies and all walks of life.

Lecture and educate about the etiology and diametral effects of sweeteners and sugar consumption in all forms.

ADI as UN ECOSOC affiliate strongly supports sustainable development in remote unspoiled areas. It is of paramount importance not to spoil the last remaining resources.

ADI Editor in chief, Professor Dr. S. M. Balaji welcomes papers worthy of publications in the JGOH with high-resolution photographs.

Today’s Information technology abilities offer opportunities for assessment sustainability, measurability of social responsibility to reverse individual chaos in the success of the whole.

Interested in joining ADI ample information on ADI can be traced on the ADI URL: [www.adint.org](http://www.adint.org)

#### **Declaration of patient consent**

Not required as there are no patients in this study.

#### **Financial support and sponsorship**

Nil.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

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