

Addressing special needs

With the Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health conference – *Autism-friendly dentistry* – taking place on 24 June in Dublin, president **Adrienne Dolan** explains the organisation's role in promoting the dental well-being of patients with special needs



As well as being president of the Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health (ISDH), I am a Senior Dental Surgeon (Special Needs) in the HSE, Dublin. The dental team I work with has a special interest in treating children with autism. This, along with feedback from delegates at past conferences, prompted the theme for the upcoming conference.

Along with hosting the day, I will share some of my team's 'tips and tricks'. These have been gathered with the assistance of parents and special schools, and help to make dentistry more acceptable for these children.

The conference is always a great opportunity to meet with like-minded people and forge supportive links with others working and interested in this area of dentistry. It is attended mostly by dentists, dental nurses, hygienists, speech and language therapists, and some occupations complementary to dentistry.

To find out more, please download the brochure at www.isdh.ie.

The Society

The Society is only nine years old, and in that short length of time so much has been accomplished. For example, our patron, the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, gave the keynote address at our 2009 conference, held in Farmleigh.

We also had the pleasure of hosting the first Joint Executive Committee Meeting of the Irish and British Societies in the Dublin Dental Hospital. Following on from this successful partnership, we aim to review dental guidelines and protocols together.

The Society has members all over the island and in 2008 the conference was held in Belfast, where the Northern Ireland Health Minister, Mr Michael McGimpsey, recognised the value of the Society by welcoming us to a gala dinner in Stormont Castle.

The Society works on several levels and has made submissions for the National Oral Health Strategy, and been invited to contribute to the Guideline Development Group (Prevention of Caries in Children & Adolescents; Pit and Fissure Sealants).

The Society is affiliated to the International Association for Disability and Oral Health, which is planning global educational curricula for special care.

Promote, preserve and protect

The Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health strives to promote, preserve and protect the oral health of people with disabilities by keeping special care dentistry at the forefront of local, national and international oral health policy and through the pursuit of the specialty in Ireland.

The Society promotes research through the ISDH/Dental Health Foundation's bursary awards. Winners have the opportunity to showcase their work by presenting at the annual conference. The 2010 ISDH/ Dental Health Foundation bursary award winner, Caoimhin Mac Ghiolla Phadraig, went on to win at the International Association for Disability and Oral Health Congress in Ghent, Belgium.

Bursary details are announced at www.isdh.ie.

Educational opportunities

The all-important principle of continuing education is promoted via the annual conference and evening lectures. Last winter, *An A-Z of childhood conditions* was brilliantly delivered to a full house by Dr Kirsten FitzGerald and Dr Eleanor Mc Govern – who gave the 26 letters of the alphabet a whole new meaning.

Members then had the opportunity to attend the spring lecture, delivered by Dr Alison Dougall, called *Providing dental care for patients with bleeding disorders with confidence*, and that

is how we all felt after the talk – very confident in understanding and treating this group of clients.

None of the above happens without a very hard working and dedicated Executive Committee. We manage to keep membership and conference costs down through generous sponsorship. We welcome new members to the Society and encourage people to look on the website – www.isdh.ie – for updates on upcoming events. ■

Adrienne Dolan is a Senior Dental Surgeon (Special Needs) in the HSE, Dublin, and president of the Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health.



The Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health conference – *Autism-friendly dentistry* – will take place on 24 June 2011 in the Convention Centre in Dublin. For further details, please visit www.isdh.ie or email adrienne.dolan@gmail.com.