

Promoting, preserving and protecting

Dr Maura Haran, president of the ISDH, highlights the importance of the general dental team in providing care for people with disabilities and the society's role in supporting this

The Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health (ISDH) is a voluntary organisation that was established in 2002 with the objective to "Promote, preserve and protect the oral health of people with disabilities". Membership is open to all with an interest in special-care dentistry (SCD) and is primarily composed of dental professionals from the Republic and Northern Ireland, in both the public and private sectors.

We are also seeing an increased interest in our organisation from the rest of the UK and beyond, and we have several new members from overseas. While many of our members are dentists working in special care in the public sector, we would like to see an increased representation of GDPs as well as allied dental care professionals from both the public and private sectors.

General dental teams are increasingly providing care for people with disabilities as a result of the welcome trend of increasing integration of people with disabilities, such as psychiatric illness or intellectual disability, into the community. Also, Central Statistics Office projections indicate that by 2046, the Irish population aged 65 and over will increase more than 2.5 fold while for those aged 80 and over, the increase will be more than 3.5 fold, compared to 2011 figures. Increased longevity with concomitant morbidity and disability, longer life expectancy for people with pre-existing disabilities and increased integration mean that more and more dental care for people with various special care needs will be provided by GDPs in the future. Therefore, it is important that continuing education in SCD is readily available to the general dental team.



Some of the Irish delegation at the International Association for Disability and Oral Health (IADH) Biennial Congress in Berlin

"It is important that continuing education in SCD is readily available"

The ISDH plays an important role in providing education in special care dentistry through continuing professional development (CPD). Each year, we host a spring evening lecture and a one-day conference, preceded by a half-day workshop, in June. These events address various aspects of special care dentistry and receive approval from the Dental Council for verifiable CPD.

ISDH spring evening meeting

Our upcoming spring evening meeting takes place at 7pm on 5 March in Dublin Dental University Hospital (DDUH) and is titled "We're older but are we wiser? – Ageing and its implications for general and special care dentistry in Ireland".

This highly topical presentation will be given jointly by Dr Jacinta McLoughlin

and Dr Caoimhin Mac Giolla Phadraig of DDUH, who are conducting oral health research into ageing as part of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and its Intellectual Disability Supplement (IDS TILDA).

The presentation will describe the changing demographics of Ireland and discuss the differential service needs of older people, based on varying levels of dependency and the implications for the future structure of dental services for this population.

Dr McLoughlin, who is also a member of the Academic Research Group for the new National Oral Health Policy, will also outline the progress of this group's work regarding older adults. Special-care

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dentist, Dr Mac Giolla Phadraig will report on some very interesting findings from IDS TILDA, which raise some important questions about our services for older adults with intellectual disabilities. These issues are of relevance to all sectors of the dental profession and all are welcome to attend this free event.

Annual conference and workshop

The ISDH Annual Conference will take place in Kilkenny on 19 June. The theme will focus on the perspective of the patient with special care needs and gaining an insight into the psychological, sensory and physical challenges which the dental setting may pose for them. It will focus particularly on those who cannot effectively communicate their feelings verbally or in other ways and who may express their distress or anxiety through 'challenging behaviour'.

Delegates will learn how to avoid pitfalls, harness positive behavioural traits and deal effectively with challenging behaviour when it arises. They will also learn strategies which the dental team can employ to moderate the challenges posed by professional and home oral care.

A supportive environment which allows the patient to better tolerate care can make provision of dental care less stressful for both the patient and the dental team and reduce the need for referral to secondary or tertiary care and the requirement for sedation and general anaesthetic.

Planning for the conference is ongoing but at present, confirmed speakers are:

Dr Dennis McGuire of Consulting Down Syndrome, co-founder of, and former Director of Psychosocial Services at, Adult Down Syndrome Center of Lutheran General Hospital, Chicago, US. Dr McGuire will address communication and behavioural issues in people with Down syndrome.

Ms Eve Carder, Deputy CEO of Dementia Care Matters, Brighton, UK. Ms Carder will speak about how to relate to patients with dementia and how to provide a supportive, non-threatening environment to help facilitate care.

Dr Elinor Bouvy-Berends, Centre for Special Care Dentistry, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. This speaker will address recognition and assessment of dental pain in people with intellectual disabilities.

Ms Kay Coombes, Director of ARCOS, Bobath tutor and specialist speech and language therapist, Great Malvern, UK. This presentation will show how principles of Facial and Oral Tract Therapy (FOTT) may be applied by the dental

Dr Gillian Smith and Sharon McAllister making their joint presentation to the iADH congress



team and carers to help the patient with hypersensitive response to oral stimuli to better tolerate oral intervention. It will also address appropriate support of positioning to reduce involuntary movements.

Ms Coombes will also facilitate our pre-conference workshop on 18 June which will provide more in-depth information on FOTT and the Bobath Approach and provide practical training in elements of these concepts. As disturbance of oromotor function and resultant oral tactile defensiveness is a common feature of many disabilities and a major barrier to provision of professional and home oral care, this training is invaluable for special care providers.

iADH Biennial Congress

Thirteen members of the ISDH attended the biennial Congress of the International Association for Disability and Oral Health (iADH) in Berlin from 2-4 October. Dr Alison Dougall and Professor June Nunn from DDUH presented an educational symposium which outlined resources developed by the iADH to support post-graduate education in SCD. The Irish delegation also contributed 10 short oral and poster presentations outlining special care services provided, service development initiatives and research undertaken, the second-largest contribution by any country to the event.

Dr Emma Corrigan won an iADH award for her presentation of an initiative supporting a homeless population to access care with GDPs through the Dental Treatment Services Scheme. We hope to have an even bigger representation at the next iADH congress which takes place in Chicago in 2016.

ISDH online

Final conference details will be available on the ISDH website - www.isdh.ie - in



Dr Emma Corrigan making her award-winning presentation at the iADH congress

due course. Those wishing to attend the conference and/or workshop will have the convenient option of online booking and payment. There is a reduced conference fee for ISDH members, who also enjoy free access to the Journal of Disability and Oral Health (JDOH). At the very reasonable membership rates of €55 for dentists and €35 for allied members, this represents excellent value.

There is even a cheaper "Lite" option for those preferring to access the JDOH electronically. Joining online is very straight forward and it is now possible to avail of a rolling annual membership option.

The Dental Health Foundation kindly sponsor three ISDH awards for projects or research in the field of disability and oral health. Members can enter for our annual special care dentistry award. The two other competitions are open to students and allied dental or non-dental professionals. Details of these competitions are available on the website.

As well as ISDH news items, the website provides educational resources, patient information and links to related sites such as the British Society for Disability and Oral Health (BSDH) and iADH.

We are also on Facebook and Twitter. Follow us, join us or attend some of our events and help us to achieve our goal of promoting, preserving and protecting the oral health of people with disabilities. ■