

Editorial

Position papers by EADPH Special Interest Groups

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The board of the European Association for Dental Public Health (EADPH) is very grateful that two of the EADPH special interest groups were able to produce position papers in their fields within a relatively short time. Their first article, "*Methodological issues in epidemiological studies of periodontitis – how can it be improved,*" was prepared by Roos Leroy, Ken Eaton and Amir Savage following their discussions with the members of the special interest group on Periodontal Epidemiology at the 2008 and 2009 meetings of EADPH.

The second article you will find in this issue. "*Tooth wear and erosion: Methodological issues in epidemiological and public health research and the future research agenda*" was prepared by Carolina Ganss, Alice Young and Adrian Lussi. This paper is predominantly the result of work completed at the meetings of the Special Interest Group "Tooth Surface Loss and Erosion" at the 2008, 2009 and 2010 conferences of the EADPH. Working with the members of the group, the authors identified gaps in research strategies. Furthermore, they pointed out that fundamental concepts of wear and erosion as an oral health problem have not yet been sufficiently defined. This important paper draws the following main conclusions with regard to the research agenda: a consensus process towards an internationally accepted index on erosion and the collection of data on the various forms of wear on a population-based level should be initiated. In addition, communication between basic and clinical sciences and the area of Public Health Dentistry should be promoted in order to discuss, for example, whether tooth wear is a public health problem or not.

The EADPH officer coordinating the special interest groups would like to use the publication of this paper as an occasion to present the respective EADPH activities to the readers of *Community Dental Health*.

In September 2007 the General Assembly of EADPH, meeting in Ghent, accepted the proposal to initiate several special interest groups at the subsequent annual meeting of EADPH in Heidelberg. This proposal aimed to improve research and encourage activities in the area of Dental Public Health in Europe. Intensive discussion identified the following topics for development:

- Caries Epidemiology and Prevention
- Gerodontology
- Health Services Research
- Periodontal Epidemiology
- Prevention of Oral Cancer
- Tooth Surface Loss/Erosion.

Then the EADPH board and the Co-President responsible for the Heidelberg EADPH conference developed the following aims for the working groups:

- Bring together people with an interest in the topic concerned
- Review and discuss the "current state of the art" in the topic or a part of the topic.
- Identify work that needs to be done to improve the "current state of the art"
- Produce a position paper that sets out the "current state of the art" and future work that needs to be carried out to improve it.
- Plan how to develop collaborations to improve some of the identified deficiencies.

In the history of EADPH this was a first: an ambitious project of uncertain success. Leading and engaged experts in the fields were asked to chair these groups. At the Heidelberg EADPH conference the groups were provided with optimal working conditions: a whole morning was reserved for the working groups, with no other potentially distracting presentations being scheduled. This allowed each group time for their discussions followed by a plenary presentation of the main points they identified.

After that meeting, feedback from participants and chairs were so positive that the EADPH board decided to continue these groups.

Looking at the experiences with these working groups at the EADPH meetings in Heidelberg (2008), Tromsø (2009) and Constanta (2010), a minority of participants attended all the meetings of a single group and at each meeting several new participants join in. So, groups not only served as forum identifying the "state of the art" and research needs but also provided new participants with a variety of useful basic information.

It is very encouraging to see that many participants have already registered not only for the 2011 EADPH meeting in Rome but also for one of the six special interest groups to continue the groups' work. The EADPH board and the conference organisers are convinced that at the Rome meeting, once again, stimulating and fruitful discussions will take place in the special interest groups.

Reference

- Roos, L., Eaton, K.A. and Savage, A. (2010): Methodological issues in epidemiological studies of periodontitis - how can it be improved? *BMC Oral Health* 10: 8.