



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération Mondiale des Associations de Santé Publique
Federación Mundial de las Asociaciones de Salud Pública
Всемирная Федерация Ассоциаций Общественного Здравоохранения
世界公共卫生联盟
الاتحاد العالمي لجمعيات الصحة العامة

World Health Assembly, Geneva, 19-24 May 2014

Provisional agenda point 14.4 Multisectoral action for a life course approach to healthy ageing.

Statement on the Oral Health of the Demented and cognitively impaired elders

World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) speaking note Supported by the International Council of Nurses (ICN)

Dear Chair,

Highnesses, Ambassadors,

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak at this honourable assembly. The following statement has been jointly elaborated with the oral health working group of the WFPHA and the International Council of Nurses.

The WFPHA is an international, nongovernmental organization composed of multidisciplinary national public health associations with an oral health working group.

WHO has highlighted the need for better prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Several NCDs are directly or indirectly linked to good oral health. As the global population ages, NCDs are responsible for increasing disease and economic burdens. In the group of older adults we find people who are dependent for activities of daily living (ADLs). Some of them have physical as well as cognitive impairment, some presenting with Dementia, in its differing forms. Frail and multimorbid elders who are dependent for ADLs contribute to the NCD problem. Unfortunately, as the cognitive impairment/dementia develops, dementia sufferers find it more difficult to communicate with their carers and to cope with day to day personal hygiene.

The WFPHA is aware that one overlooked problem with this group relates to poor oral hygiene. Sufferers are unable to clean their mouths or forget to do so with a major effect on their quality of life and health status.

These problems can be prevented simply and at very low cost by ensuring that health systems and health education allow for those who care for the frail elders and dementia sufferers to provide daily oral hygiene (mouth cleaning) for their patients and to recognise oral problems.

The WFPHA therefore urges that particular attention is paid to addressing this problem at all levels, with the active participation of national public health associations and allied groups, in a national and global response to raising awareness of the problem and ensuring that carers are trained to prevent it and do so.