

Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders

Promoting Peace through Oral Health

What We Are About

Alliance for Oral Health across Borders was founded for the purpose of promoting peace and well-being through oral health in diverse countries, regions and communities in the world facing social, economic and political unrest. Through humanitarian efforts, the “Alliance” is committed, independently of any political agendas, to foster, create and sustain collaborative relationships to bridge common understandings of health through oral health to bring about peace and harmony among peoples.

Who We Are

We are an international non-governmental organization created by oral health care professionals, representing dozens of nationalities, dentists, dental educators, members of the oral health care team, business leaders, public servants, administrators, researchers, advocates and others with the vision of achieving global health through oral health by means of collaborative dialogues and actions.

What We Want To Do

Discussions and activities by members will focus on creating a supportive environment for harmonious relationships across cultures. We believe that science, and specifically the body of knowledge and expertise associated with oral health, not only can be the foundation for individual and community health and well-being, but it can also enable communication among individuals, regardless of political allegiances, when governmental relations may be difficult. Science or health diplomacy can build bridges, helping to prepare and nurture protective environments for people living in conflict, post-conflict or hostile areas to come together for a safer unifying purpose of sustaining health of populations.

Whether the specific goal is to raise the over-all health levels of communities or to remove health inequalities, or for oral health professionals living in different countries to understand and appreciate common causes of conflict and explore resolutions for more peaceful interactions, our intent is to develop leadership and advocacy programs for the purpose of building human capacity to promote peace and well-being through oral health.

Guiding Principles

Basic to the work of the “Alliance” is the over-all guiding principle of ethical behavior and impartiality, respecting all racial, ethnic, religious, political, gender and age characteristics of peoples everywhere. The “Alliance” is dedicated to the spirit of humanitarianism, having genuine concern for improving the lives of others. A key to mutual understanding is respect for the human right of health for all, including oral health.

Within this context, the “Alliance” views oral health as an integral part of general health, with many of the risk factors shared with diseases affecting other body systems. Prevention, health promotion and emergency care are essential and critical priorities when designing health programs. Science-based and evidence-based interventions are encouraged to ensure quality and partnerships with other health professions, and diverse sectors of society ranging from education to agriculture to water and sanitation.

Initiatives

- I. To inaugurate the concepts of the “Alliance”, plans have begun for a launch in the summer of 2013 of a working conference in Turkey, a country bridging Europe with Asia and the Middle East. Oral health colleagues from nations whose governments have been in conflict and who live and work in hostile environments will be invited to participate in this meeting. The goal of this meeting is to prepare leaders to engage in dialogue about oral health initiatives within their own countries and across borders. Opportunities for training in leadership and negotiation skills will be available and embedded in the context of discussions about oral health needs and their solutions. Invitees will include oral health professionals from Bangladesh, China, Congo, India, Indonesia, Iraq (Kurds, Shia, and Sunni), Israel (Israeli

and Palestinians), Ivory Coast, Japan, North and South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Taiwan, and other areas that have experienced hostility and strife.

Listening and reflections are the building blocks for understanding and respect of other humans. Sharing of human experiences builds bonds and connects people from diverse communities under shared human values. For dialogue to be successful, participants require skills to manage peer pressure, and understand different cultures where understanding and recognition of others who disagree are not welcomed. At this meeting, leadership skills will be developed to focus on positive engagement through communication, advocacy, and setting high ethical standards and aspirations for peace.

These two pathways - dialogue and leadership - converge through oral health and health promotion projects that we hope to develop during and after the meeting in Turkey. Projects will be developed by the participants to set the stage for future meetings where members of the "Alliance" will share experiences in achieving goals of promoting health in their communities, as well as refine their skills in dialogue and leadership.

- II.** Oral health students and newly graduated professionals can serve as 'Young Ambassadors' extending the reach to greater numbers in the pursuit of peace. Focusing on creating career pathways in the oral health domain, young professionals can be the conduit for harmonious relationships as they grow, become educated and mature into understanding, compassionate, caring oral health professionals, pursuing careers in education, research, clinical service delivery, or in other entrepreneurial or administrative roles.