
Periodontology: the case for automatic recognition of a professional qualification

Position paper on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2013/55/EU

January 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Periodontology is the art and science of maintaining the health of the tissues which support teeth and dental implants. It is not only critical to oral health, but also to general health and wellbeing. Moreover, it has been scientifically proven that untreated periodontal diseases increase the risk of suffering life-threatening cardiovascular disease, adversely affect the control of diabetes, are involved in neurodegenerative processes, such as dementia, and raise the risk of premature birth. Despite already being the most common chronic inflammatory conditions of humans, the prevalence of periodontal diseases is expected to increase even more in the EU.

To treat these diseases and provide specialist care, periodontology has been established as a separate dental specialty. However, unlike orthodontics and oral surgery, periodontology is absent from the list of EU dental specialties which benefit from the automatic recognition system on the basis of coordination of the minimum training conditions as envisaged by a recently amended Professional Qualifications Directive. As a result, specialists in periodontology do not enjoy full professional mobility, despite the specialty being recognized in more than two fifths of EU member states (Article 35 of Directive 2013/55/EU)¹.

Adding periodontology to the list of dental specialties regulated by the amended Professional Qualifications Directive will significantly reduce the bureaucratic barriers which currently hamper the professional mobility of qualified specialists in periodontology across the EU. Many trainees in periodontology travelling to another EU member state to receive specialty training and postgraduate qualifications in periodontology then have to go through lengthy bureaucratic procedures to have their diploma recognised upon return to their home country. Tackling these barriers will greatly help the many patients who will be able to benefit from improved access to specialist care. The impact of the required recognition will be greatest amongst the aging population (>60years of age) in which the level of severe periodontal disease is predicted to increase to ~ 85%. The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) therefore calls on the European Commission to update Annex V point 5.3.3 of the Directive 2013/55/EU and include periodontology in the list of dental specialties enjoying automatic recognition of professional qualification in the EU.

¹ Croatia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK

1. The growing impact of periodontal diseases on individuals and healthcare systems in the EU

Periodontal diseases are conditions which affect the tissues which support teeth. These diseases are the most prevalent chronic inflammatory diseases of humans¹. They are a major cause of disability and social inequality. Periodontal diseases, which are typically painless and progressive, have many different oral and systemic consequences. The most serious oral effects are tooth loss, with loss of capacity to chew, enjoy food and socialise with confidence. Systemically, periodontal diseases may, amongst other effects, increase the risk of suffering life-threatening cardiovascular disease, adversely affect the control of diabetes and its many different complications, be involved in neurodegenerative processes, such as dementia, and raise the risk of premature birth². The risk of suffering adverse effects of periodontal diseases are increased by poor oral hygiene, smoking, stress, and illnesses and conditions which adversely affect body defence systems, including HIV and certain anti-rejection drugs employed following transplant surgery. There may be a family history of marked susceptibility to rapid, progressive periodontal disease.

In addition to the disabling impact that periodontal diseases may have on individuals, these diseases have huge, far reaching consequences in general healthcare systems, for example in the management of patients diagnosed with diabetes, which is associated with an increased prevalence, extent and severity of periodontal diseases³. With anticipated changes in population demographics and growing number of people retaining their natural teeth throughout life, the level of severe periodontal disease (10% overall in Europe) is predicted to affect ~ 85% of people aged 60 and more⁴. The negative impact of periodontal diseases on general health and well-being is therefore set to dramatically increase.

2. The importance of specialist care

Periodontal diseases are largely preventable. Effective prevention is highly dependent on individuals maintaining good levels of oral hygiene, supported by regular, routine dental attendances. The treatment of commonly occurring forms of periodontal disease can be

¹ Van Dyke TE, van Winkelhoff AJ Infection and inflammatory mechanisms. *J Clin Periodontol* 2013; **40** (Suppl. 14): S1–S7. doi: 10.1111/jcpe.12088.

² European Federation of Periodontology Manifesto: Perio for a Better Life. <http://perioworkshop.efp.org/efp-manifesto/>

undertaken in primary dental care settings. When, however, it comes to the management of atypical, aggressive and advanced forms of periodontal disease, as exists in >10% of the population in Europe, clinical outcomes are greatly improved by specialist care. Where specialists in periodontology are rare or do not exist, caused by the absence of specialty recognition, general dental practitioners are brought to treat atypical, aggressive and advanced/severe forms of periodontal disease for which they may not have necessary skills. The availability of specialist care in periodontology, as presently exists in 12 EU States, may, as a consequence, be viewed as an important public health measure in limiting unnecessary risks and complications in common, high-health-cost conditions, including diabetes, pregnancy, neurodegeneration and cardiovascular disease - an important contribution to the EU Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Fit for Work Europe initiative.

3. EU recognition of periodontology

The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) welcomes the positive results of the recent modernization of Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. The automatic recognition of formal qualifications for those dental specialties which are common to at least two fifths of EU Member States is fully supported by the EFP.

The EFP calls on the European Commission to update Annex V point 5.3.3 of the new Professional Qualifications Directive 2013/55/EU and include periodontology – currently recognised by 12 EU Member States – in the list of dental specialties with automatic recognition. The inclusion of periodontology would:

- **Eliminate outdated barriers** responsible for the existing inequality in access to specialist expertise and care in periodontology in the EU. There are only few universities in the EU offering programmes in periodontology which means that many EU dentists wishing to specialise in periodontology have to go and study in another EU member state. Automatic recognition of the professional qualifications would benefit these practitioners by cutting red tape and facilitating their professional mobility across the EU countries already recognising periodontology.
- **Help limit detrimental and costly impact of untreated severe periodontal diseases** (due to the lack of specialist management) on general health and wellbeing throughout the EU. Whilst the majority of mild to moderate cases may be managed by general practitioners, advanced diseases require complex interventions (such as surgery) and specialist skills and knowledge. The demand for timely diagnosis and management of complex cases is pressing.

- **Reflect scientific and clinical advances in oral and dental healthcare**, with dentists becoming as much oral physicians as dental surgeons. This paradigm shift is presently being led by developments and associated changes in the training and competency requirements in periodontology, with trends for specialists in periodontology to be engaged in the shared care of patients with chronic non-communicable diseases.
- **Promote the harmonisation of teaching**, training and continuing professional development across all countries already recognising periodontology³. It would help to create a common European pool of skills and knowledge, drawing on the experience gained from the existing EFP accredited specialist training programs in periodontology⁴ in the EU (Annex 3).
- **Promote opportunities to better integrate oral and dental healthcare** into general healthcare and wellbeing provision. Such developments would offer efficiencies and enhanced effectiveness in healthcare, and make an important contribution to the Platform for Better Oral Health in Europe, let alone the EU Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and the Fit for Work Europe initiative. As recognised in the Joint Action on Chronic Diseases, appropriate management of advanced and complex forms of chronic diseases can support more rational distribution of healthcare expenditure, enhance sustainability of healthcare systems and create positive outcomes for the economy and society.

4. The European Federation of Periodontology: the voice of periodontology in Europe

The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) represents national periodontal societies in 26 European countries and more than 16,000 dentists dedicated to improving oral health and, in turn, general health and wellbeing through excellence in the practice of the discipline.

EFP national member societies actively work towards better recognition and a high standard of education and training for periodontology in European countries for the benefits of patients. As such, the EFP is running a peer-reviewed accreditation and quality assurance programme for three year full-time postgraduate periodontal university programmes based on an agreed

³ Sanz M, Meyle J Scope, competences, learning outcomes and methods of periodontal education within the undergraduate dental curriculum: A consensus report of the 1st European workshop on periodontal education – position paper 2 and consensus view 2 *Euro J Dent Educ*2010, 14(Suppl. 1) 25-33

⁴ Chapple I L C, Walmsley A D, Mattheos N, Schoonheim-Klein M Conclusions and consensus statements on: Innovative educational methods and technologies applicable to continuing professional development in periodontology –consensus view 4 *Euro J Dent Educ*2010, 14(Suppl.1) 41-42



common curriculum in line with the European requirements contained in the new Professional Qualifications Directive 2013/55/EU. The programme currently comprises 12 training centres across Europe. As part of its role to contribute to the public debate, the EFP believes it is important to work in close cooperation with the European Institutions on issues of relevance for dental specialists.

The EFP is committed to evidence-based practice and quality assured education and training in the best interests of patients and communities. EFP workshops, which are supported by international opinion leaders from around the world, provide state-of-the-art, evidence-based guidance on the clinical practice of periodontology.



Annexes

Annex 1

List of member associations of EFP

Austrian Society of Periodontology
Belgium Society of Periodontology
British Society of Periodontology
Croatian Society of Periodontology
Czech Society of Periodontology
Danish Society of Periodontology
Dutch Society of Periodontology
Finnish Society of Periodontology
French Society of Periodontology
German Society of Periodontology
Hellenic Society of Periodontology
Hungarian Society of Periodontology
Irish Society of Periodontology
Israeli Society of Periodontology
Italian Society of Periodontology
Norwegian Society of Periodontology
Polish Society of Periodontology
Portuguese Society of Periodontology
Serbian Society of Periodontology
Slovenian Society of Periodontology
Spanish Society of Periodontology
Swedish Society of Periodontology
Swiss Society of Periodontology
Turkish Society of Periodontology

Associate members

Lithuanian Society of Periodontology
Moroccan Society of Periodontology
Romanian Society of Periodontology
Ukrainian Society of Periodontology



Annex 2

List of countries where periodontology is recognised as a specialist branch of dentistry

Croatia
Belgium
Bulgaria
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovenia
Sweden
United Kingdom



Annex 3

List of EFP accredited programs for the provision of specialist training in periodontology

Belgium: Catholic University of Leuven

France: University of Strasbourg and University Paris7- Denis Diderot

Ireland: University of Dublin, Trinity College

Israel: Hebrew University of Hadassah and Rambam University Hospital Haifa

Netherlands: Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam

Spain: University Complutense Madrid

Switzerland: University of Bern

Sweden: Sahlgrenska Academy of Göteborg

Turkey: Yeditepe University Istanbul

United Kingdom: UCL Eastman Dental Institute