

# Experts at Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF) Symposium Call for Collaboration and “Joining Up Existing Evidence” to Promote Successful Caries Prevention and Management

## Inaugural Symposium marks longer-term partnership between the ACFF and UAE International Dental Conference (AEEDC)

**Dubai, 18 February 2016** – The Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF) held its first annual symposium at the 20th annual UAE International Dental Conference in Dubai (AEEDC) on 2 February 2016. The day-long session – titled “The Fight for a Cavity-Free Future: ‘Joining Up’ the Evidence to Make an Achievable Difference” engaged key thought leaders in robust discussion to not only understand the existing body of evidence regarding the current approach to caries prevention and control, but to determine how to integrate that evidence and identify a clear path towards a cavity-free future for all. The symposium hosted a group of experts across key disciplines, including, nutrition, education and behavior change, cariology, public health, clinical practice, and caries management. “The annual AEEDC meeting brings together leading oral health professionals to address pioneering advancements in oral health research and technology,” said Professor Abdullah R. Al Shammery, Rector of the Riyadh Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy in Dubai and Co-Chair of the local North Africa and Middle East ACFF Chapter. “Today’s ACFF Global Symposium is a powerful example of the importance of global collaboration among oral health stakeholders to promote efforts and evidence that address the burden of oral disease on a global scale and, in consequence, drive meaningful change.”

### **A Need for Collaboration:**

Symposium experts agreed that dental caries is a complex, multifactorial disease that cannot be prevented by the traditional focus on single factors in isolation. Very often, oral health efforts have worked in silos to address pressing issues around oral disease burden. The group suggested that organized collaboration and synergy that effectively “joins up” existing evidence between individual elements of the “Caries Puzzle,” can help fulfil the primary goal of the ACFF, a cavity-free future for all.

### **Key Takeaways:**

Symposium experts discussed what specific factors needed to be part of the comprehensive approach and stressed the need for synergy to operationalize the existing evidence:

- **Sugar:** following the new World Health Organizations (WHO) guidance on reducing the amount of free sugars to prevent caries, obesity and diabetes.
- **Education and behavior change:** enabling both patients and health professionals to do the right things at the right time to prevent and control caries.
- **Cariology:** implementing the wealth of evidence about how to control caries, realizing that fluoride is important, but not sufficient, against high sugar challenges.
- **Public health:** responding to the need for advocacy on caries and oral health issues, often neglected in public health policy and practice.

- Clinical practice and management:** recognizing the clinical evidence to support a preventive approach, as well as adopting a System to deliver caries classification and disease management in dental clinical practice, the International Caries Classification and Management System (ICCMS™).

Figure 1. "Caries Puzzle" Showing a collaborative relationship between multiple critical stakeholders to effectively shift the global burden of caries.



Importantly, experts overwhelmingly agreed that “Joining-up” these pieces of the “Caries Puzzle,” combined with suitable actions from other external stakeholders – including health professions, the public and patients – will allow us to achieve a cavity-free future more rapidly than separate strategies or individual group efforts.

**A Focus on Sugar** A key strategic element for action discussed at the symposium was how best to react to the recently published evidence-based guidelines on sugar consumption issued by the World Health Organization. Implementing these guidelines should impact the health outcomes of patients in terms of caries, obesity and diabetes. However, the group agreed that there exists a gap in policy efforts globally, and discussed ways to strengthen action at the policy level, with potential activities ranging from implementing a sugar tax to expanding sugar information on nutrition labels, noting that similar policies and programs in the tobacco industry have been effective in educating the public and changing behavior. Updating education on the health impact of sugars was also felt to be a priority.

“The recently published World Health Organization guidelines on sugar consumption, along with the existing evidence on caries management and prevention, suggest the need to update practice and training protocols so they reflect this

new evidence-based nutritional guidance” said Professor Paula Moynihan, Newcastle University, United Kingdom, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Nutrition and Oral Health. “Today’s discussions reemphasize the need for clear and meaningful guidance to the dental professional and patients on how to best address the connection between sugar and oral health.”

### **About the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF)**

The Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future, a non-profitable charitable organization, is a group of worldwide leading dental experts who have joined forces to help implement changes to dental health practices across the globe. The aim of the Alliance is to promote initiatives to stop the development and progression of tooth decay in order to move towards a Cavity-Free Future for everyone. To achieve this goal, the Alliance believes that collaborative action is required to raise awareness of dental caries (tooth decay) and positively influence people’s dental health habits.

Since its establishment in 2010, the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future has increased its global presence to 25 Chapters and growing, including Australia, Brazil, Canada-United States, Central America, Central Eastern Europe, China, Colombia, India, North Africa/Middle East (NAME), Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, the United States and Venezuela amongst others. Global activities have included providing an online database of tools and other resources for professionals and patients ([www.allianceforacavityfreefuture.com](http://www.allianceforacavityfreefuture.com)), securing commitment from dental school deans to integrate caries prevention and management into school curricula and promoting community-based education and prevention programs to families and communities.

Colgate-Palmolive Company is a supporter of the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future; the company supports improved oral health through its partnerships with the dental profession and government and public health agencies.

### **About the UAE International Dental Conference & Arab Dental Exhibition – AEEDC Dubai**

The UAE International Dental Conference & Arab Dental Exhibition – AEEDC Dubai is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Minister of Finance, and President of the Dubai Health Authority. The event is in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Interior Naturalization and Residency Administration, Dubai, United Arab Emirates and has gained the esteemed support from Dubai Health Authority, Global Scientific Dental Alliance, Arab Dental Federation, Executive Board of the Health Ministers Council for Gulf Cooperation Council States, GCC Oral Health Committee, Riyadh Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy, Arab Academy for Continuing Dental Education, and International Association for Orthodontics-IAO. AEEDC Dubai is the pioneering and largest dental event in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia region, providing the best platform for dental professionals and industry experts from the MENASA region and other parts of the world to update knowledge, network, interact and generate business partnerships.

### **About Caries**

Worldwide, 60–90% of school children and nearly 100% of adults have dental caries. <sup>[i]</sup> In fact, caries (which includes all stages of tooth decay) is the most common, yet preventable chronic disease on the planet. <sup>[ii]</sup>

When dental caries occurs, hard tissue in the tooth is damaged by acids that naturally exist in our mouth and help break down foods, which results in tooth decay. Early dental caries can be prevented and controlled if the multiple

causative factors, namely a susceptible tooth surface, the presence of cariogenic acid producing bacteria in dental plaque biofilm, and the exposure to ingested sugars, are reduced.

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## REFERENCES

<sup>[1]</sup> World Health Organization

<sup>[2]</sup> Oral Health Atlas, FDI World Dental Federation