

Bright Smiles Bright Futures: Philippines

Building a future full of smiles



Session highlights!

Bright Smiles Bright Futures 2

Plenary Session 3

Workshop Discussion 4

- Breakout session 1: Recommendations for health workforce 4
- Breakout session 2: Recommendations for target community 5
- Breakout session 3: Recommendations for caries prevention 6

Executive Summary 7

Bright Smiles Bright Futures

A two-day multi-disciplinary workshop on **Bright Smiles Bright Futures: Philippines, building a future full of smiles** was held in Philippines, on 22nd and 23rd June 2023.

The workshop marked by the presence of several dentists and important stakeholders from Philippines aimed to:

- Promote the integration of oral health into primary healthcare systems, recognizing the interconnectedness of oral health with general health.
- Focus on a shift towards a preventive approach, especially primary prevention with regards to oral diseases.
- Provide a framework for prevention of oral diseases/dental caries and promotion of health by supporting policies and programs.



Plenary Session



Shifting the caries status from highly prevalent to no caries in Philippines



Oral health is an essential component of well-being that significantly impacts systemic health and health equity.¹ Poor oral health has been described as a ‘silent epidemic’ sweeping nations.² Oral diseases impact an estimated 3.5 billion people around the world and are among the most prevalent non-communicable diseases.³ Despite this, unmet health care needs and poor oral health are pervasive.² **Universal health coverage (UHC) ensures that all people have access to all the health services they need, when and where they need them, without facing any financial hardship. It encompasses the complete spectrum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care throughout the life course.**⁴

Philippines has taken great efforts in moving towards UHC. The 2019 Philippines UHC Act was structured to meet the goals of effectiveness, quality, and affordability.⁵ **The UHC Act states that every Filipino shall be granted access to preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care with regards to medical, dental, mental, and emergency health services.**⁶ Despite all the endeavours, oral health problems such as dental caries are highly prevalent across all ages among Filipinos.⁷ Unmanaged caries can have detrimental long-term social and psychological impact on both children and adults.⁸ Timely and responsive inter-sectoral interventions, focusing on prevention, must be set to attain the target decrease in oral diseases such as dental caries in Philippines.⁷ **Adopting primary prevention interventions is important as it ensures that the disease does not happen.**

We stand at the door of a rare opportunity and must act now to reduce the burgeoning burden of oral problems with focus on preventive interventions to ensure optimal health.⁹ Including oral health in UHC will be of utmost value as it helps dental services to become more integrated in the wider health-care system and to be more accessible and responsive to the oral health needs of the population.

Workshop Discussion

Breakout session 1: Recommendations for health workforce



Prevention first approach in oral health policy- The smartest and most effective way



- Dentists, medical doctors, public health nurses, midwives, barangay health workers (BHW), barangay dental auxiliary, and barangay nutrition scholars (BNS) should be a part of the oral health workforce.
- Training of the health workforce recommended to be done once or twice a year through seminars, hands on training, didactic techniques, and team building.
- Provide an incentivized system of remuneration through promotion, monetary incentives, travel incentives, awards, and recognition for the health workforce.
- Collaborative strategies to implement 'prevention first' oral policy:
 - All local government units (LGUs) from regional, provincial, city and municipal level should strictly follow the "life stage approach" guidelines for pregnancy, childbirth, neonates, infants and early years, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adults.
 - To avoid duplication of roles, a memorandum of association must be drafted between: LGU, Department of Education (DepEd), Philippines Dental Association (PDA) and affiliates, dental colleges, Philippines national police and armed forces of the Philippines.
 - Local legislative body should support Sangguniang Panlalawigan/ Panlungsod.
- The stakeholders should help in implementation of health workforce by supporting the "prevention first" program, facilitating seminars/trainings and establish strong partnership with different stakeholders.

Breakout session 2: Recommendations for target community



Improving the health of communities through oral health education and promotion- Target all to protect all!



- Dentists and other oral health professionals should aid in the conduct of oral health screenings, deliver presentations, and offer guidance on preventive oral health services.
- Training topics should include proper tooth brushing habits, self-care/ proper hygiene, behavior management towards health, ways to improve health seeking behaviors.
- Accredited Integrated Professional Organization such as PDA must collaborate with DepEd and Department of Health, and Ministry of Health.
- Dental universities can offer a platform for clinical training, allowing aspiring dentists to practice their skills before completing their studies.
- Dental professionals should collaborate (dentists and hygienists, dental technologists) to foster partnerships with other local government dentists, dental school collaborations and other dental organizations and can reduce the present shortage of dentists.



Breakout session 3: Recommendations for caries prevention



Implementation of preventive strategies- The way ahead to a cavity-free future



- Objectives set for the prevention strategy program are as follows:
Reduction in prevalence of dental caries. Reduction in decayed, missing and filled teeth and interim therapeutic restorations indices. Achieving “prevention first” goal- REACH: **R**ealistic-**E**xpected-**A**ttainable caries free-**H**it the standard-
 - National statistics of 72% caries rate
 - Target of 5% reduction of prevalence per year for 3 years (67% - 62%- 57%)
 - Identifying stakeholders (healthcare workers like nurses, midwives, BNS, BHW, and parents)
 - Enabling support of government agencies (Department of the Interior and Local Government, DepEd, Department of Social Welfare and Development)
- Oral health education, tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste (1000-1500 ppm) and no spitting for protection, disclosing solutions, and no soda- less sugar to lessen the substrate are recommended for plaque removal.
- Recommendations for different forms of fluoride in prevention of dental caries:
 - Tooth brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
 - Fluoride varnish four times a year.
- Diet and nutrition recommended as a part of the “prevention first” policy comprises of:
 - Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months.
 - Complementary feeding from 6 months - 2 years old.
 - No sugar consumption below 2 years old, behavioral modification/ conditioning.
 - Reduced intake of carbohydrate rich or processed foods.
 - Follow pinggang pinoy and nutrition pyramid, and nutritional recommendations based on caries risk assessment.

Executive Summary

Dental caries is one of the most common oral diseases in Philippines that adversely affects the quality of life of Filipinos. The burden and suffering caused due to caries is preventable. Therefore, oral health should be a part of the UHC.

Experts from Philippines have put forward a consensus plan for integrating oral health policy in the UHC. The recommendations focus on different preventive strategies for caries to improve the oral health status in Philippines. It covers different aspects of the health workforce needed to implement preventive strategies and the target community to provide oral health education/promotion. Experts agreed on a set of recommendations for health workforce, target community and caries prevention protocol.



Implementation of ‘prevention first’ approach- The key to eradicate caries from Philippines



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