

Policies, Statements and Guidelines in Oral Health Care

One of the cornerstones of FDI's missions is to "Contribute to the development and dissemination of policies, standards and information related to all aspects of oral health care". This objective is being met by the development of a database of references for such information. This database is open to everybody and is located on the homepage of the FDI: www.fdi.org.uk

How can this database help national dental associations?

A task that is almost universal for national dental associations is to consider and suggest policies and clinical guidelines for their members on many issues related to oral health care practice and management. At times such issues are raised by the public or the media and an immediate response is needed from someone in the profession; this may be from the national dental association if a rapid response is required. Some national associations have resources and a large team of staff trained to search for data and perhaps even organise consensus conferences on specific topics. However, the large majority of member associations have to rely on local expert opinion, customary practice in the country or even common sense when resolving such issues. Some also turn to the FDI Scientific Commission for advice and

guidelines. Clearly, many national dental associations would benefit if a database of guidelines, directives, conference proceedings, consensus papers, policy statements etc, on topics related to oral health was made available for fast access. National dental associations would thereby be able to appraise what other professional associations in the dental community have developed and possibly also implement those elements which could be adapted to their local professional, cultural and socio-economic needs.

How can this database help general practitioners?

General practitioners frequently experience a need to find answers to problems which may arise in their daily clinical practice. These problems may be of a scientific nature, may relate to practice management or perhaps are questions on environmental issues. Of course there is enormous information available in the scientific literature, on the Internet and elsewhere; the difficulty is to find the most relevant primary or secondary research. Access to a database with guidelines, directives and policy statements developed, amongst others, by prestigious professional organisations will reduce doubts and time spent on trying to



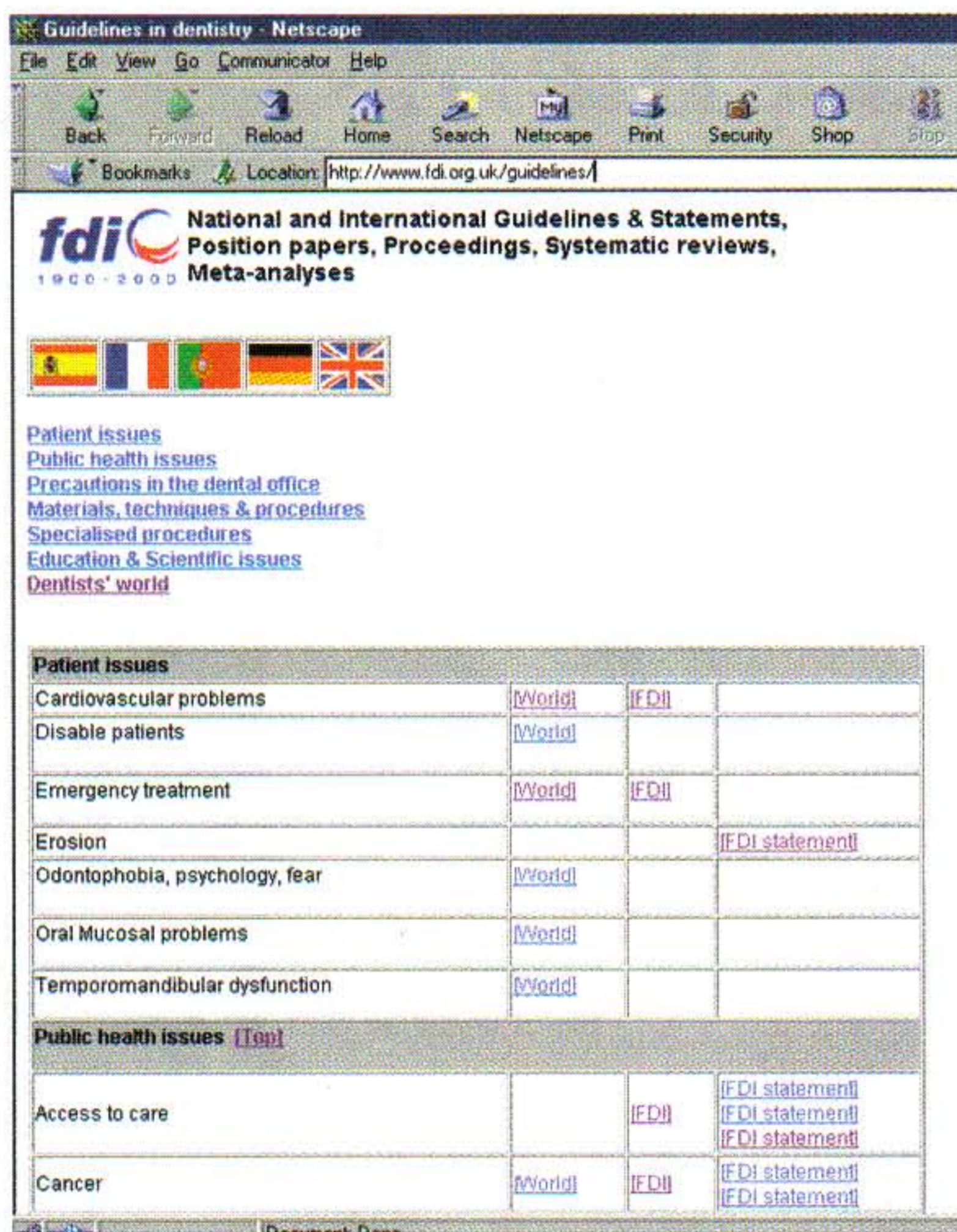


Figure 1. Opening text of the FDI database

The FDI database

With these objectives in mind, an interactive web-based database has been developed containing guidelines, directives, conference proceedings, consensus papers, policy statements etc, on topics related to oral health care. The heterogeneous nature of this type of information makes it difficult to identify and locate. So far, the database has evolved through exploration of the Medline, appraisal of reference lists in scientific papers, systematic searches on the Internet, quotations from presentations at various professional meetings, etc.

Currently, approximately 340 references in

recorded. The great majority of these are in English.

The database is accessed through the FDI home page through a simple interface with multilanguage options (Figure 1). At this stage the options are Spanish, Portuguese, German, French and English. The references are organised into subcategories, which at present consists of seven groups, each containing four to eleven topics (Table 1). The actual references are described with year, title, country and originating source. A further identification is either by their ISSN/ISBN identifier or the Medline Unique Identifier, UI. The UIs in the database are hyperlinked to the actual description in the PubMed interface of Medline. Moreover, some of the references are available on Internet, and these are also hyperlinked directly from the database.

What about FDI statements and projects?

The aim of the database is also to reflect the activities of FDI. All FDI statements made by the general assemblies during the last 10 years are included and these statements can be printed out. The short, single page, statements are available as text-files, while longer statements can be downloaded as .pdf-files (Adobe Acrobat Reader). Moreover, the various outcomes of the projects of the FDI Commission are presented. Most of these are published in *FDI World* and in the *International Dental Journal*. It is intended to make these specific papers available online in full text as .pdf files with direct hyperlinks from the database.

Keeping the database updated

Table 1. Topics in oral health covered in the FDI database.

Patient issues	Public health issues	Precautions in the dental office	Materials, techniques & procedures	Specialised procedures	Education, manpower & scientific issues	Dentists' world
Cardiovascular problems	Access to care	Cross-infection control	Amalgam and mercury	Endodontics	Education	Ethics
Disabled patients	Cancer	Dermatitis, allergy, latex	Anaesthetics and sedation	Forensic dentistry	Epidemiology	Manpower
Emergency treatment	Caries	Environmental issues	Antibiotics and antimicrobials	Gerodontics	Guideline development and quality assurance	Marketing
Erosion	Diet	Nitrogen oxide	Fissure sealants	Implants	Research and standards in dentistry	Patient journal contents
Odontophobia, psychology, fear	Fluorides	Safety and precautions	Pharmacotherapy	Oral surgery		Practice
Oral mucosal problems	General and oral health relationship	Waterline contamination	Prophylaxis, oral health	Orthodontics		
Temporo-mandibular dysfunction	HIV and AIDS		Saliva and oral health	Paedodontics		
	Tobacco		Tooth bleaching, cosmetics	Periodontics		
			Toxicology and biocompatibility	Prosthodontics		
				Radiology		
				Restoratives and therapy		

this concept has been the driving force for creating the existing database. Further enhancement and quality assurance of its contents now rests on all of us. I hope all National Member Associations, as well as individuals and other professional organisations, will understand the benefit of contributing and will participate in a collective effort to keep the database updated.

Please supply the FDI office with references to, or any type of information on, national and local guidelines, directives, conference proceedings, consensus papers, policy statements etc, on topics related to oral health care. The appropriate email address is located at the bottom of page 3.

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