

EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues, have a wonderful winter!



Hanna Lähtenmäki is the new Chair of the Finnish Association of Dental Hygienists. In addition to being a dental hygienist, she also has a PhD degree.

It has been a great pleasure to get to know dental hygienists all over Finland and Europe and to gain insight into the vastly differing working conditions under which we promote oral health. It is evident that people in our profession are fuelled by passion. But let's get real and start talking about money. The groundwork for the pay negotiations that will take place in the spring was laid during the autumn. The Negotiation Organisation for Public Sector Professionals, JUKO, which belongs to Akava Special Branches, represents the members of Akava in negotiations for agreements with municipalities and wellbeing service counties. JUKO negotiates with employers on behalf of employees. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Finnish Association of Dental Hygienists when I say that both the basic pay and the fee criteria of dental hygienists should be revised. It has been disconcerting to see how unevenly salaries and fees are distributed in Finland.

It is incomprehensible that many dental procedures are now the responsibility of dental hygienists, but the procedure fee is paid to someone else. Now is the time to voice our opinion on what changes and improvements our members want to see made to the terms of employment.

The fees of dental hygienists in the wellbeing services counties can be given different pricing codes, i.e. expert tasks in healthcare (S3TAT100), senior expert tasks in healthcare (S2TEA100), and demanding expert tasks in healthcare (S3TVA100). In many wellbeing services counties, dental hygienist tasks are roughly classified as expert tasks because pay grades have not been defined more precisely. In these tasks, development of competence through on-the-job training or other additional training plays a big role. It is good that this is being talked about, because the value of further training is not always appreciated even though it increases the personnel's knowledge and skills.

There is also concern among dental hygienists about the provision in the EU directive stating that dental hygienists should not be allowed to perform tooth whitening at private clinics and that the strongest substances could only be purchased by dentists (dental practitioners). Dental hygienists learn to perform tooth whitening during their studies, and we have had strong expertise and skills in this area for decades. Why should highly educated dentists who lead dental teams and treat diseases have an exclusive right to perform tooth whitening? This is a waste of resources, amounting to the endangering of our livelihood! This is relevant to dental hygienists all over Europe, not just in Finland. The European Dental Hygienists Federation (EDHF) is now compiling a report on the matter.

Delegates from the Finnish Association of Dental Hygienists participated in an EDHF meeting, where the topics also included the free movement of dental hygienists within the EU. This would require establishing an EU-wide standard for Bachelor-level dental hygienist education. We can be proud of the excellent training we receive in Finland and also spread knowledge about it on the EU level.

The Finnish Association of Dental Hygienists is a power player and the voice of its members. As our new promotional materials put it: let's network, get stronger and make an impact! I'll smile when I see you! ■