Health sector in the implementation of the Minamata Convention on mercury
Kingston, Jamaica, 18-19 October 2016

WHO experiences and PAHO’s oral health plan

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Overview

- Current status of dental amalgam
- Activities
  - Minamata Convention: dental amalgam
  - Projects to phase down dental amalgam
- PAHO’s oral health plan
- Resources

Dental amalgam: current status

- Dental amalgam is still widely used
- The choice of materials for dental caries management depends on: tooth, site and size of caries lesion, healthcare provision, financing and preference, patient preference, technology available, cost and environmental factors

Dental amalgam: current status

- Current existing methods and materials would need to remain available in the short and medium terms
- Alternative restorative materials are desirable from an environmental health perspective, however, a progressive move away from dental amalgam would be dependent on adequate quality of alternative materials – quality needs to be further improved for use in public health care

Activities

- WHO, in cooperation with UNEP, organized an expert group meeting in Geneva on the “Future use of materials for dental restoration” in 2009
- “Phase down” of dental mercury use worldwide was recognized

Activities

- Effects of mercury on health and the environment
- Best management practices for amalgam waste
- Training of dental health professionals
- Country experience from all WHO regions
The Minamata Convention and dental amalgam
10 October 2013

The Convention’s provisions for dental amalgam - a mercury-added product containing 50% mercury - make it highly relevant to the dental profession.

Dental amalgam is the only mercury-added product subject to a phase-down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mercury-added</th>
<th>Provisions</th>
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<td>Dental amalgam</td>
<td>Measures to be taken by a Party to phase down the use of dental amalgam shall take into account the Party’s domestic circumstances and relevant international guidelines and shall include two or more of the measures from the following list:</td>
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<td>1. Setting national objectives to minimize or reduce the use of dental amalgam;</td>
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<td>2. Setting national objectives to minimize or reduce releases of mercury and mercury compounds to water and land;</td>
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<td>3. Setting national objectives to minimize or reduce releases of mercury and mercury compounds to air;</td>
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<td>4. Setting national objectives to reduce emissions of mercury and mercury compounds from production and use of dental amalgam;</td>
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The Convention sets out nine provisions for its use.

WHO and UNEP are initiating demonstration projects to phase down dental amalgam in different regions of the world.

Priority areas:
1. Strengthen oral health promotion and disease prevention
2. “Phase down” instead of “Phasing out”
3. Research and development of quality alternative materials
4. Environmentally sound management of waste in dental clinics
5. Promotion of measures to reduce releases during trade and supply as well as from dental clinics
6. Strengthen the awareness of the general public to dental amalgam alternatives
7. Training dental professionals

The East Africa Dental Amalgam Phase-Down Project (EADAP)

- Focused on three countries: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda
- Aimed at demonstrating the phase-down approach of dental amalgam use in low-income countries
- The project examined supply and trade patterns, raised awareness of preventive dental care, encouraged alternatives and promoted environmentally sound waste management practices

Outputs:

- 196 dental personnel benefitted from capacity building and training activities in the three countries
- Topics: hazards of mercury; oral health promotion and clinical preventive dentistry, promotion of alternatives, and environmentally sound management (ESM) of waste
- Dental amalgam separators were installed in 3 dental care facilities (including government, private, and academic institutions) in each country
Awareness raising materials

- WHO and UNEP created flyers and posters to raise awareness on dental amalgam and its impact on the environment, targeting Ministries of Health, chief dental officers, national dental associations, dentists and patients

Dental amalgam phase down is possible in developing countries by:

- Creating awareness of its environmental risks
- Promoting alternatives for dental amalgam when clinically indicated
- Building capacities of dentists on oral health promotion and disease prevention
- Supporting best management practices and environmentally sound management of waste (recycling and use of facilities for hazardous waste storage and treatment)
- Ensuring regulatory framework and legislation are in place

Third-party payment systems

- In most countries having third-party payment systems dental schemes do not yet recognize the use of alternative materials
- In most low and middle income countries the use of alternative materials for restoration of tooth structure, dental fillings or build-up material is preferred because of its higher cost
- Dental restoration prohibitive costs may lead to tooth extraction in the case of dental pain or discomfort
- In order to effectively switch to non-amalgam materials, it will be mandatory to have health insurance companies/parties incorporate reimbursement mechanisms giving higher economic support to patient dental care using non-amalgam material (This can only become established through direct work with Ministry of Health)

PAHO’s Oral Health Plan

Caries Free Communities Initiative:

- 8 year plan to combat burden of caries
- Reduce the burden of oral disease by 2015
- Reduction of the number of infections and increasing the coverage of services in the most vulnerable populations in the Region of the Americas

Dental amalgam phase down is possible in developing countries by:

World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry

Important national government/health authority elements

Activity proposed by Professor Poul Erik Petersen, WHO Oral Health Consultant

1. Formulation of national goals for prevention of dental caries
2. Formulation of relevant national health surveillance system
3. National monitoring system for measurement of reduction in the use of dental amalgam
Resources on WHO website
http://www.who.int/topics/oral_health/en/

- Programs and activities
- Fact sheet on oral health
- Oral Health in WHO regions
- Technical information
- Publications

Resources on PAHO website
http://bit.ly/2cZEvun

- Communities Free of Caries Initiative
- Oral health subjects
- Oral health indicators
- Country information
- Publications
- Education and training

Thank you!

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