Periodontal disease is a major public health issue that should be addressed increasingly by the medical and dental communities, the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) and the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) have stated in a joint manifesto. In order to convey this message to more dentists, the EFP recently launched an international awareness campaign aimed at more than 300,000 professionals in Europe.

Kicked off at the recent international symposium of the Swiss Osteology Foundation in Monaco in May, the Outreach Campaign aims to highlight both the relationship between periodontal and systematic diseases, as well as the importance of periodontitis prevention. According to the manifesto, which has been available on the organisation’s website since March, there is convincing evidence from a large number of studies that periodontitis may increase the risk of developing diabetes or cardiovascular disease, and may lead to adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth or low birth weight. Other systemic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or certain kinds of cancers are also thought to be influenced by periodontal inflammation.

In light of this evidence, dental professionals will have to fundamentally change the perception of their responsibilities as providers of general health, the manifesto states. Multidisciplinary approaches through collaboration between dental and medical communities, as well as within the dental communities, will have to be developed further to meet future patients’ needs.

The content of the manifesto is based on recommendations made during a joint EFP/AAP workshop, which took place in Spain in November last year and drew 80 experts in the field. The workshop was held under the leadership of Profs. Mariano Sanz from Spain, Maurizio Tonetti from Italy, and Niklas Lang from the University of Hong Kong’s Faculty of Dentistry. Among other measures, it recommends thorough periodontal evaluation of patients presenting with signs of systematic diseases by dentists. It also calls for more clinical trials and studies researching the effects of periodontal therapy on several disease factors in different populations in order to obtain additional reliable scientific data on these issues.