

Professor Poul Erik Petersen: An outstanding example of a lifetime dedicated to improving global oral health through his groundbreaking work in public health



It is with the deepest regret that we announce that Professor Poul Erik Petersen has passed away. His whole life was dedicated to improving global oral health through his groundbreaking work in public health. Professor Petersen passed away on March 19, peacefully, surrounded by his family.

Professor Petersen's many contributions to the dental community will have him be always remembered as a promoter of the cause of oral health as part of the global public health agenda as Chief of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Oral Health Programme. As such, his achievements have been numerous, including launching the first World Oral Health Report in 2003. Professor Petersen also worked for the WHO Regional Office for Europe, while providing assistance to ministries of health and public health administrators worldwide and contributing his knowledge to the above-mentioned Office.

In addition to his vast work in global public health, Professor Petersen held a position as Professor of Global Oral Health and Community Dentistry at the Danish University of Copenhagen. Later on, he was elected Dean of the School of Dentistry and Vice-Director of the School of Public Health at the same institution. Professor Petersen published more than 350 scientific publications, thus significantly contributing to the progress of public health research in universities all over the world. He also played a crucial role in planning and implementing community health projects in a large number of developed and developing nations.

He had a unique public health-related vision, persistently pushing for improvements in oral health worldwide. Professor Petersen's contributions to the dental community were invaluable, while he made a lasting impression on the oral health community globally. He played a notable role in the global application of research projects that attempted to integrate disease prevention and health promotion, further oral health in the workplace, and lessen oral health disparities through schools. As the head of the WHO Oral Health Programme, Professor Petersen played an influential role in bringing the program's integration into the global public health agenda. The program had significant achievements under his guidance, one of them being the first-ever World Oral Health Report's historic launch in 2003.

He regularly attended FDI mid-year committee and council meetings and actively contributed to FDI's work to promote oral health.

As representative of WHO, Professor Petersen contributed industriously to many FDI-WHO joint articles and publications and was a member of the body of authors who drafted the FDI-WHO Advocacy guide for oral health professionals on tobacco and oral health. FDI's gratitude covers his activity on WHO's full involvement and co-organization of numerous regional events, such as the Global and Regional FDI-WHO Fluoride consultation conferences in France and in China.

He was a man with a mission, namely to improve dental health, which was a source of inspiration to all the dental professionals who knew him.

In addition to his outstanding academic qualities, Professor Petersen was highly appreciated by his students and colleagues for his good nature and generosity to extend a helping hand and also his sense of humor, qualities which gained him friends all over the world.

As a generous editor, he has consistently supported numerous publications since day one, including Oral Health and Preventive Dentistry (OHPD) under the auspices of Quintessence Publishing House and The Stomatology Edu Journal (Stoma Edu J) under the auspices of The Romanian Academy.

We are deeply grateful for his friendship and dedication and for all his valuable work. Because of his many contributions to global oral health around the world, his remarkable legacy will live on.

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