THE 74TH INDEPENDENCE DAY OF PAKISTAN, 2020

14th August 2020

THE PAKISTAN ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG LIMITED
Dental Health - Gateway to Better General Health

By Ms Amrita Daryanani

The Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong launched the "Dental Health – Gateway to Better General Health" project in 2017 and has been working hand in hand with Pakistan Association of Hong Kong, The India Association of Hong Kong, Health in Action and Voices of Diversity to provide free dental outreach service to Non-Ethnic Chinese (NEC) community.

Through eight events across various districts, we have been successful to determine for the first time, the oral health status of the Non-Ethnic Chinese communities (focusing on the Indian subcontinent) in Hong Kong demonstrating the pressing need to educate us and enhancing our self-care capacity.

Although the Basic Law dictates that residents are entitled to equal public healthcare access, we lack access to dental health facilities because of insufficient information and unaffordability. Therefore, the project was initiated by a team from the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Hong Kong (Dr. Prasanna Neelakantan, Dr. Mike Leung and Professor Chu) with the objective to raise awareness of the oral health conditions of the local NEC community. Dr. Prasanna Neelakantan said, "Due to differences in language, culture and religion, ethnic minorities are always on the horns of a dilemma when it comes to dental services – either go to an expensive private practice or fly back to their home countries for treatment. At the same time, they do not have a clear understanding of the dental services available to them in Hong Kong". Seven dental health fairs conducted screening for more than 1100 participants with personalised techniques to maintain their oral health. Also, our online platform including a webinar reached out to more than 2500 participants to deliver multi-lingual information on the oral health importance and the facilities available in Hong Kong for this needy cohort in maintenance.

It is our responsibility to enhance community efforts for effective measures to determine oral health status. These efforts have successfully empowered Pakistan Association of Hong Kong and other organizations to expand community efforts locally to expand their general health check to engage in dental services, determined the NEC oral health status as they develop self-care skills to brush and floss correctly, and raise awareness on the importance of dental health issues for effective preventive & maintenance measures for a wide range of age groups, income level and ethnic backgrounds. Through consistent and sustained efforts, we have been successful to utilize our networks and access to high society dominant locations and better understand the challenges faced by the communities. Based on the customized needs, we were successful in combining general & dental health checks, expanding efforts to bridge the available facilities gap and engage the community platforms. In the meantime, these are some advice for you to look after your teeth better!

- Brush your teeth twice Regularly
- Change & Clean your brush regularly
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Eat less sugary food and drinks
- Don't smoke
- Drink more water
- Use a tongue scraper and floss
- Visit a dentist every six months once

With continuous persistence and expansion to more community districts, we hope to enhance access to dental services, accelerate the translation of prevention into a real community setting and raise dental health awareness. You can find more information on our upcoming events [https://www.facebook.com/hkddentalhealthfair/](https://www.facebook.com/hkddentalhealthfair/) or send your enquiries to dentalhealthfair@gmail.com.

Better Teeth, Better Health!