

# COMMENTARY

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## Doing the right thing



### BACKGROUND

The role of an expert can be variously defined, but experts themselves should be aware of what is expected and what is not. Dentists are highly trained, skilled professionals who differ from tradesmen because they always place the patient's best interests first rather than any monetary advantage. The core business of a dentist is to help people achieve and maintain optimal oral health. To achieve this goal requires that the dentist understand optimal oral health and what is needed to achieve it.

### DEFINING OPTIMAL ORAL HEALTH

The definition of optimal oral health must be tailored to the specific situation. If, for example, teeth are extracted and replaced with implants, is that providing optimal oral health? Experts can point out that teeth are easier to maintain than implants. However, periodontitis can often be treated but peri-implantitis can remain and create a baffling and difficult clinical condition that is difficult to manage. Expert opinion says that implant failure is inversely related to experience and training, so knowledge and skill are crucial to the management and the well-being of the patient. It's all a matter of context.

### TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Although consulting expert opinions helps dentists become skilled and knowledgeable practitioners, the decision regarding any course of action must remain firmly within the context of how it's perceived. Although it's good to be an expert, practitioners must not forget that it's equally important to do the right thing at the right time and not merely to do something because we have the knowledge and skill required.

#### Clinical Significance

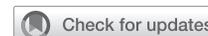
Implants replace missing teeth, not just teeth. An expert opinion should keep the focus on telling those who have the skill and expertise to place implants how they should proceed in implant cases—doing implants not just because they can but because it's in the patient's best oral health care interest.

Bartold PM: Are you an expert? *Austral Dent J* 63:393, 2018

Reprints not available

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## Advocating for the role of dentistry in global health



### BACKGROUND

The United Nations High-Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases (UN HLM on NCDs) was held in September 2018, but the most common NCD worldwide—dental caries in the permanent dentition—was not mentioned, nor was periodontal disease, the world's seventh most common NCD. Oral health itself was not even mentioned, yet the global oral disease burden is estimated to affect over 3.9 billion people. The purpose of this meeting was to build consensus, create awareness of the NCD burden worldwide, highlight the economic consequences of inaction taken against these diseases, and propose strategies to address the situation. The goal is to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by a third by 2030.

### NEEDED INVESTMENTS

The World Health Organization (WHO) proposed "best buys" for NCDs that need to be implemented to prevent the occurrence of 10 million avoidable deaths by 2025 and 17 million preventable heart attacks and strokes by 2030. These best buys would also lead to a potential \$350 billion in economic growth over these periods.

To implement WHO's best buys would only require an investment of \$1.27 per person per year in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, yet it would yield a 15% reduction in premature mortality from NCDs and 3.2 million saved lives by 2030. Every dollar invested would yield a return of at least \$7 by 2030.