

Editorial



Korean initiatives for noncommunicable and periodontal diseases

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Globally, the rapid increases in the aging population and the number of patients with chronic diseases are incurring a substantial socioeconomic burden. In Korea, as of 2020, the medical expenses for patients with diabetes and hypertension were 2.51 and 3.35 billion dollars, respectively, and the death rate due to those diseases was also on the rise compared to the previous year. For periodontal disease, which shares common risk factors with noncommunicable diseases, the prevalence in 2018 was 30.6%, and 1 out of 3 economically active members of the population suffered from periodontal disease. Data from the National Health Insurance Service showed that the rate of increase in the number of patients and treatment costs for periodontal disease was about 4 times higher than the increase in the number of patients and treatment costs for other chronic diseases. However, the general oral examination rate is only 26%, and this rate tends to decrease significantly with age. To address this problem, the Korean Dental Association (KDA) presented policy proposals to the government, such as the introduction of panoramic radiography during medical checkups at a life-transition period.

With the completion of the First Oral Health Plan (2017–2021) established in 2017 by the Korean government, the Second Oral Health Plan (2022–2026) was established. The Second Oral Health Plan set the vision of “an aging society, extending healthy lifespan by promoting oral health.” It is composed of 17 strategies in 6 areas with the main goals of “preventive oral care and strengthening dental competencies” and “ensuring oral health equity for the vulnerable.” The first of the 6 areas is “oral health promotion and establishment of an integrated management system between systemic diseases and oral diseases.” The pipelines related to noncommunicable diseases involve developing customized oral care programs for each related disease, such as diabetes or hypertension, and implementing a model that includes oral disease in the management of chronic diseases in primary care settings.

Since 2015, the Korean Academy of Periodontology (KAP) has implemented its approach to periodontal disease associated with noncommunicable diseases by preparing a task force. The KAP established “Gum Day” in 2009 and has been carrying out campaigns related to periodontal disease, following all items of the practical guide of the Global Periodontal Health Project announced by the FDI in 2017. In order to prevent periodontal disease,

national efforts and social support are required, but the most important factor is individual effort, for which education on periodontal disease must come first. Therefore, the KAP has established a library of booklets and visual materials for publicity and education. As such, the government, the KDA, and the KAP are jointly making efforts to raise awareness of periodontal/oral health in Korea. In particular, we intend to present a new model of a disease management system through national health management programs linked to noncommunicable and periodontal diseases.