

# Four hundred senior dental leaders who will change the world

## Towards a new Dental Institute research philosophy



**Professor Raman Bedi**  
Chairman of the Global Child Dental Fund and Head of King's Centre for International Child Oral Health

● 2012 will not only see London host the Olympic games, but also the sixth annual Senior Dental Leader's (SDL) conference. The programme to develop 400 senior dental leaders in a decade is a timely collaboration of major international importance between the Global Child Dental Fund, King's College London and the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. The programme's main sponsor is Colgate Palmolive.

### Why is developing dental leaders so important?

Without good leadership, resources are wasted and we do not win the support of global health researchers and funders. Yes, of course, we need advocacy and passion, but without good leadership dentistry will remain in the periphery of international health campaigns.

An example given on the SDL programme is that of polio. A horrible infectious disease which still plagues a number of countries, but its eradication is within sight. Which is why the Gates Foundation, alongside many government international aid programmes, is donating billions of pounds to effect the eradication of polio. One of the reasons for such exceptional support is that those involved in polio management have shown themselves to be credible, building a global alliance, demonstrating good governance and delivering programmes effectively, but most importantly they have captured the imagination of international funding agencies. This is advanced public health leadership at its best.

### Dentistry continues to remain on the sidelines.

Dental caries continue to impact upon the majority of the world's population. We all carry the scars of the disease either in the form of fillings or lost teeth. Yet we have difficulty in obtaining international

funding to address this preventable disease, which remains the commonest chronic disease in children. The evidence continues to support the view that dental caries can be eliminated within a generation, given the right resources and right leadership.

As dentistry continues to ask for the same things, it is little wonder that we get the same response – limited support exists, which is insufficient to

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tackle the problems it faces. We need to state a new vision. It is in this context that the Senior Dental Leadership programme exists to nurture a global alumni of key senior dental leaders that will change the face of global oral health.

The continuing success of SDL is evident. It has a vibrant network of alumni, boasting some of the most senior figures in global dentistry, and the demand for the programme continues to grow.



**SDL delegates working together, including dental school deans from Thailand, Israel, India, USA and South Africa.**



**Delegates of the SDL 4 (2009) programme**