

Response by Dr. Richard Valachovic on behalf of the Congress to
The President of Ireland Mrs. Mary McAleese
following the launch of the Global Network on Dental Education

I can not think of a more appropriate, better qualified person in the world today than you to launch this initiative. You have honoured all of us with your presence – and we are very conscious of the privilege you have extended to those of us from the 66 countries assembled here to day. I believe the best way we can thank you is to continue the work this Global Congress in Dublin has begun.

Our GOALS for IFDEA are to:

- build community;
- share knowledge;
- raise standards; and
- ultimately improve oral health worldwide

As President, we appreciate that you do not want to have a lecture on a website, but the temptation to demonstrate two or three elements is just too great, and I hope you will indulge me for a moment.

I'd like to draw your attention to the section on global health realities. In this section, you will find information about the need and context for our work. As you can see on the left hand side of the screen, there is information about poverty, hunger, access to clean water, education and health. An important role for IFDEA is to raise awareness of the global health challenges in addition to providing the educational resources to help address these challenges.

At the heart of the Global Network for Dental Education is the Global Knowledge Centre. In this section, you will find reports and presentations from this Global Congress, links to over 80 journals related to oral health, discussion groups and – most importantly – the platform for sharing curricular and course materials among the dental education community.

This is the section of the site that requires the most development. We have built the framework, but it is the members of the dental education community who must complete the work.

I call upon each of the delegates here today to contribute to the development of this site. Your engagement is necessary to achieve our goals. IFDEA's Global Network for Dental Education is a living resource, and as such will always be a "work in progress." I invite everyone here today not just to visit, but to contribute.

The website you have just launched will be the vehicle for sharing knowledge among dental educational programs in every corner of the world in our effort to improve oral health globally.

As we bring this Global Congress to a close, it is my pleasure to thank President McAleese on behalf of the global dental education community for honouring us with her presence on what for us has been an important occasion – and a new beginning for IFDEA. We also wish to thank Dr. Martin McAleese, the President's husband, for his help in making this Congress possible.

President once again we in dental education have been honoured with your presence and stimulated by the values you and Dr McAleese exemplify."