

# The South African Dental Association (SADA) Celebrates World Oral Health Day 2023 by promoting Health Education and Awareness

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World Oral Health Day (WOHD) is a global initiative that takes place annually on 20th March to raise awareness about the significance of oral health and promote good oral hygiene practices. In South Africa, WOHD was celebrated with various activities and events organized and/or coordinated by the South African Dental Association (SADA), aimed at promoting oral health education and awareness among the public.

One of the key supporters of WOHD in South Africa was GSK Consumer Healthcare South Africa (Pty) Ltd, a Member of the Haleon Group, which partnered with SADA to conduct several oral health activities. One such activity involved handing out toothbrushes to young adults at children's homes, including the Abraham Kriel and Durbanville Children's Homes, emphasizing the importance of brushing teeth regularly from a young age. These initiatives aimed to instil good oral hygiene practices in young adults and

promote healthy oral habits from an early age.

Another notable event was the collaboration between SADA, the YDC & SAAPD, and Colgate to distribute 20,000 oral health kits to children between the ages of 4 and 8 years all over South Africa. These kits included toothbrushes, toothpaste, and educational materials, providing children with the necessary tools and information to maintain good oral health. This initiative aimed to reach out to a large number of children and promote oral health awareness among them, creating a positive impact on their oral hygiene practices.

Furthermore, SADA, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, organized a health day for the Down Syndrome Association on 21st March. The event aimed to provide oral health care education and support to individuals with Down syndrome, who may have specific oral health needs.



This initiative highlighted the importance of catering to the unique oral health requirements of different communities and promoting inclusive oral health care practices.

In addition to these activities, the GSK Consumer Healthcare South Africa (Pty) Ltd, a Member of the Haleon Group conducted a webinar on 23rd March, which featured Dr Rohini Bisoal, Oral Hygienist Elna van der Ham, and Dr Khanyi Makwakwa as the host. The webinar focused on various aspects of oral health education, including the importance of oral hygiene practices, the role of nutrition in oral health, and common oral health issues. With 306 viewers in attendance, the webinar aimed to raise awareness about oral health and educate the public about maintaining optimal oral hygiene.

SADA also organized a public webinar, which was available on YouTube, with Dr Khanyi Makwakwa, SADA National Liaison Officer for the World Dental Federation (FDI). The webinar addressed several topics related to oral health, including the connection between oral health and overall health, the importance of preventive oral care, and the role of oral health care professionals in promoting good oral hygiene practices. This initiative aimed to reach a wider audience and educate them about the significance of oral health in maintaining overall well-being.

The media also played a significant role in promoting WOHD in South Africa. Dr Jean van Lierop and Dr Corne Smith appeared on Expresso on SABC 3, discussing the importance of oral health and creating awareness among the viewers. Dr Paul Mathai participated in an interview on Metro FM, discussing various aspects of oral health and promoting good oral hygiene practices among the listeners. The YDC also conducted five radio interviews during the week of WOHD on the Clicks Radio Station, reaching approximately 1.2 million people in stores countrywide. All of these interviews were loaded onto the YDC Facebook page and made available on YouTube, reaching a wider audience and spreading the message of oral health awareness.

In addition to media coverage, SADA's social media outlets played a key role in promoting World Oral Health Day by reaching a bigger audience and raising oral health awareness. The impressive data on the reach and engagement of these social media campaigns demonstrate the efficacy of SADA's online presence in promoting oral health awareness. SADA's social media efforts were successful in engaging the public and raising interest in oral health, garnering over 71,000 impressions, 2,230 engagements, and 330 post link clicks across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

In addition, SADA's Dentist Webinar, which had 306 Zoom viewers and an additional 27 YouTube viewers, offered oral health care professionals vital instruction, boosting their knowledge and expertise in promoting oral health. The radio interviews on Clicks Radio Station, which reached an estimated 1,2 million listeners each week, widened the audience for the oral health awareness message. The daily breakdown of listeners can provide additional insight into the reach and impact of these interviews.

In addition, the SAAPD contributed to social responsibility and public relations activities by delivering 170 oral health kits to cancer patients in South African wards. The collaboration between SADA and SMU was so successful that people were already asking for the event to be repeated next year – we delivered 500 oral health kits to dialysis patients. In addition to providing practical resources for oral health care, these initiatives raised awareness of the significance of oral hygiene in vulnerable groups.

In addition to social media and public events, SADA utilised email marketing to reach its wide network of connections; 9,624 people received World Oral Health Day material. This email marketing functioned as an additional successful method of disseminating the oral health awareness message and urging individuals to prioritise their oral health.

The amazing reach and impact of other events such as webinars, radio interviews, and the distribution of oral health kits reflect the success of SADA's efforts to promote World Oral Health Day in South Africa. SADA was able to promote awareness about oral health, educate the public and oral health care providers, and encourage individuals to prioritise their oral health and well-being by leveraging numerous channels and engaging multiple stakeholders.

Furthermore, SADA and other organizations utilized their websites and newsletters to share informative articles, infographics, and videos related to oral health. These resources provided valuable information on oral hygiene practices, common oral health issues, and preventive measures, further reinforcing the importance of maintaining good oral health.

Apart from public events and online efforts, SADA also engaged with oral health care professionals through continuing professional development (CPD) programs. These programs aimed to update oral health care professionals with the latest research, techniques, and best practices in oral health care. By empowering oral healthcare professionals with up-to-date knowledge, SADA aimed to enhance their ability to educate and guide patients in maintaining optimal oral health.

In conclusion, the celebration of World Oral Health Day in South Africa was a comprehensive and multi-faceted effort that involved various organizations, including SADA, GSK, Colgate, and the Young Dentists Council, among others. The activities ranged from community events, webinars, media engagements, social media campaigns, and CPD programs, all aimed at raising awareness about oral health, promoting good oral hygiene practices, and educating the public about the significance of maintaining optimal oral health. Through these combined efforts, World Oral Health Day in South Africa was successful in spreading the message of oral health awareness and empowering individuals to take charge of their oral health and well-being.

