

disease prevention are integrated with noncommunicable and chronic disease prevention, we can make progress for better oral health and prevention of oral diseases worldwide," Petersen said.

Even farther under the health-systems radar are the psychological problems associated with having discoloured, diseased or missing teeth. The person becomes uncomfortable socializing, loses self-esteem and begins a spiral of decline.

The good news is that much of the damage is preventable.

"Some people tend to think that if you're old, there is little chance that you will change your lifestyle in terms of tooth cleaning or dietary habits to be healthy, or other behaviour modifications," Petersen said. "But the experiences gained in some countries

have shown that you can also at old age achieve healthy lifestyles and have positive outcomes as an effect of health-education intervention programmes."

Starting people on dental care programmes and exposing them to fluoridated water and toothpaste improves dental health regardless of a person's age. Increasing the ratio of dentists to population, especially in poorer areas, is essential, as is educating caregivers such as workers in homes for the elderly. Alerting general medical practitioners on what to look for is also necessary.

In the United States in the 1950s — as was the case with most industrialized countries — more than half of the people aged 65 and over had lost all their teeth, the CDC's Gooch said. Now it is less than 30%. In addition to educating health professionals, CDC



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Many elderly people worldwide do not have a full set of teeth.

emphasizes the role patients can play in maintaining and monitoring their own oral health. ■

Theresa Braine, *Mexico City*

Recent news from WHO

- WHO and other UN partners said it was too early to recommend male circumcision services as part of HIV prevention programmes. They were responding to unpublished findings of clinical trials in South Africa presented on **26 July** at the 3rd International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis and Treatment in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Results of the trials suggested that male circumcision could reduce HIV infection.
- WHO emergency teams were still receiving reports of possible cases of Marburg haemorrhagic fever and investigating these, WHO said on **28 July**. Clinical specimens from possible Marburg cases were being shipped to the Special Pathogens Program, Public Health Agency of Canada, for testing. By the end of July, Angola's health ministry reported a total of 368 cases and 323 deaths from Marburg fever.
- The Indonesian Ministry of Health has been monitoring more than 300 people who came into contact with the country's first laboratory-confirmed H5N1-positive human case of avian influenza, WHO said on **29 July**. The man in question died on **7 July**.
- The Chinese Ministry of Health reported on **1 August** an outbreak of a mystery illness on **22 July** in China's Sichuan Province, WHO said. The Ministry reported 181 possible cases and 34 deaths that may have been caused by infection with the *Streptococcus suis* bacteria from pigs. Sporadic cases of human *S. suis* infection are known to occur worldwide, usually through occupational contact with pigs.
- WHO's Regional Office for South-East Asia convened an informal consultation on avian influenza on **1–2 August** in Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam reviewed the pandemic avian influenza threat and the availability and use of antiviral drugs and vaccines.
- WHO said on 2 August it had been helping Niger's Ministry of Health respond to the famine in the African country. A 12-member emergency task force is being assembled for deployment to Niger to support the WHO country office. According to the latest available figures, an outbreak of cholera has affected 61 people and killed 10 in the district of Bouza.
- WHO is seeking broad consultation on next year's World Health Report on human resources for health via the internet and email. A draft outline will be posted on the internet by the end of October. WHO is encouraging schools for health professions to national, international donors and the general public to give their feedback. The report, subtitled "working for health", will be launched on World Health Day, 7 April 2006.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2005/en/index.html>



WHO

Mission leader, Dr Emilienne Anikpo (right), Communicable Diseases for WHO Niger, Dr Soga Garba (centre) and Operations Manager, Rob Holden, study a map to identify some of the most affected areas to be visited. They were part of a WHO rapid assessment team that travelled to Niger between 27 July and 2 August. The WHO rapid assessment mission was instrumental in helping WHO revise its flash appeal for Niger, which seeks US\$ 1.3 million to address health issues associated with the food crisis".



WHO

Members of WHO's rapid assessment team along with members from the Ministry of Health and local health workers visit a health centre in the village of Kelemé, in Bouza district (Tahoua region) where patients suffering from cholera are being treated.