



# How sustainable is the dental industry?

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David Westgarth speaks to **Erania Brackett**, Chief Marketing Officer and Head of Sustainability, Dentsply Sirona

## *1. Do you think dentistry is ahead of or behind the curve when it comes to sustainability?*

**Erania:** Dentsply Sirona and its partners have taken important steps towards creating a more sustainable dental industry – particularly in the last year – but the industry is behind the curve in general. Last year, we conducted a global study of more than 1,300 dentists around the world to understand their sentiments and needs when it comes to sustainability. We found that dentists believe the industry is lagging behind, both in terms of action and knowledge. Almost all dentists (nine in ten) say that sustainability is important. But only half of the dentists surveyed know what actions they need to take to be more sustainable in a professional capacity and feel comfortable talking to their patients or suppliers about sustainability.

The good news is that there is appetite for change, with three in four dentists saying they want to learn more about being sustainable in their industry. Sustainability is a big challenge that can only be tackled as a collective. Every action taken is a step

forward for our industry and our planet, so it is key that everyone in the dentistry recognises its importance and takes concrete action.

## *2. Which areas do you think are ripe for improvement? Conversely, in which areas does dentistry excel?*

**Erania:** We still have a very long way to go, but it is heartening to see players in the industry taking steps, setting targets and implementing sustainability strategies. At Dentsply Sirona, we launched our own sustainability strategy 'BEYOND. Taking action for a brighter world' in 2021, which sets out ambitious goals across three strategic pillars – 'Healthy Planet', 'Healthy Smiles' and 'Healthy Business'. We have already made great progress towards our short-term (2025) goals, achieving our initial targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water withdrawal for manufacturing and warehouse operations. We will continue to work towards our long-term goals and set additional targets to hold ourselves accountable – actions that we urge the wider industry to take as well.

What is vitally important is that the industry comes together to collectively move the needle forward, leading the way in developing sustainability knowledge and roadmaps. More precisely, the FDI World Dental Federation's Sustainability in Dentistry initiative, of which Dentsply Sirona is a proud co-founding partner, provides guidelines and objectives for achieving a sustainable procurement and supply chain process throughout the dental industry. Through the recently published Consensus Statement,<sup>1</sup> it defined sustainability in dentistry, describing key challenges and opportunities for us all to join hands and drive the change.

## *3. Tell me more about the policies and initiatives to improve sustainability across Dentsply Sirona.*

**Erania:** Our BEYOND sustainability strategy is of course our most important initiative, as it sets out the goals and targets we need to work towards. The Dentsply Sirona Employee Resource Groups, such as DS Women and BOLD (Black Organization for Leadership & Development) connect employees with

Erania Brackett



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similar backgrounds and interests to help drive initiatives forward and build a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Our community engagement policy is another important initiative for us, establishing the governance process for our community investment programme and outlining the guiding principles and controls in place to ensure charitable activities are carried out with due diligence. All of these policies and programmes reflect our company's vision and values, ensuring we live by them every day as we strive to act sustainably in everything we do.

I encourage our partners to read our Sustainability Report<sup>2</sup> on the company website – it details our goals, policies, partnerships, initiatives, and overall achievements in great detail.

#### *4. How can we collectively move the conversation on sustainability from ideas and policies to implementation?*

**Erania:** What we see across the board, both in our company and the dental industry

in general, is enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge around sustainability. What our global sustainability study revealed is that while dentists want to become more sustainable, they often don't know how. So it is important for us to address their need and lead the way in showing them exactly how to get started on their sustainability journey - with a clear path and set of actions to take.

Our Dentsply Sirona Sustainability Educational Curriculum<sup>3</sup> was designed with this in mind. This is a free, online course in our DS Academy website that provides both knowledge and concrete suggestions for action, with interactive modules led by experienced experts. It introduces dentists to the biggest sustainability challenges and opportunities within the dental industry, with ideas and resources participants can use to further sustainability in their practice and beyond. The FDI Sustainability in Dentistry Toolkit<sup>4</sup> is another great resource we've developed as part of the Sustainability in Dentistry initiative. It offers practical guidance to dentists and their teams on how to reduce their practice's environmental

impact. Now is truly the time for action when it comes to sustainability, so it is crucial that we give everyone the tools they need to step up and play their part.

#### References

1. FDI World Dental Federation. Consensus Statement on Environmentally Sustainable Oral Healthcare. Available at: <https://www.fdiworlddental.org/sustainability-consensus-statement> (accessed February 2023).
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3. Dentsply Sirona. Sustainability for the dental industry. Educational Curriculum. Available at: <https://www.dentsplysirona.com/en/academy/curricula/sustainability-curriculum.html> (accessed February 2023).
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