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Media Release

Universal Children's Day: Dental Hygienists Support the Right to Good Oral Health

November 13, 2013 (Ottawa, ON) – On November 20, dental hygienists will join with all Canadians in celebrating Universal Children's Day.

First proclaimed by the United Nations in 1954, Universal Children's Day is a time for people, young and old, to reconfirm their commitment to protecting and promoting children's rights, including the right to health, education, and freedom from harm. While much progress has been made over the past 59 years, many children continue to experience neglect and abuse, and many still suffer from preventable diseases, both in Canada and abroad.

A recent report from the Canadian Institute of Health Information revealed that severe tooth decay and cavities, both of which are highly preventable, are now the leading cause of day surgery among children ages 1 to 5 in Canada. Approximately 19,000 children under the age of 6 undergo day surgery each year to treat dental decay. For this reason, the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) urges the government to take action on children's oral health. As Mary Bertone, president of CDHA, explains, "The right to adequate health care includes the right to good oral health." She continues, "Governments must work together to implement children's oral health policies that focus on disease prevention and education, as well as improving access to care for all." Given that optimal oral health is the cornerstone of overall physical, social, and mental wellbeing, disease prevention programs will benefit not only Canada's children, but society as a whole.

While Canadian policy makers have an obligation to support children's universal rights, parents and guardians at home have a role to play too. Children are less likely to experience cavities if good oral hygiene habits are instilled early. Help your children to brush twice a day for two minutes and to floss. Promote healthy food choices and the use of fluoride, keep sugary treats to a minimum, and arrange regular dental visits for your children, from the age of one. And of course, you should share your concerns about children's oral health with government leaders. Together, our efforts will help to fulfill children's long-established rights and give them something to smile about!

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 17,000 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the 6th largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit:

www.dentalhygienecanada.ca.

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