

Healthy teeth and the life standard

V.K. Leontiev
Moscow. Russia

The notion of "life standard" started to be used by the sociologists long ago and gradually has become a generally accepted and universally admitted term that means a totality of qualities and properties (characteristics) of a personality and a society, their life, health, work, existence, nutrition, rest, environment conditions. In this way the notion of "life standard" has got two sides - inside, which depends on the personality itself, and outside that depends on the development level of the society, state, nature factors, civilization level, achieved and utilized benefits.

There is a strong connection between a great many of above mentioned characteristics and factors. The connection between the person's (society's) health and the life standard is immediately relevant to the medicine. This connection is so obvious, that there is no need in any additional proves. The essence of this connection consists in many restrictions, imposed by the health level on work, rest, vital activity and even on man's existence possibilities. The restrictions imposed by physical disability, cardiovascular diseases, by diabetes, psychological diseases on the way of life and its standard are well known by everyone. That's why one of the most important tasks of any society is the increase of the people's life standard. By the level of this indicator, one could judge of the civilization, progression level, society and state prosperity, about the level of their correspondence to the people's wishes and aspirations. For the last decade the problems dealing with the life standard have greater and greater connection with the rational usage of the earth resources, its ecology, healthy way of living, the education of the personality.

We haven't met before any analytical research, which would study the connection between the man and society life standard and one of the most important systems of the human

body - the condition of his dento-maxillary system. At the same time the existence of such a connection is evident and requires its study and analysis.

In connection with the fact that this research is destined mainly for the dental surgeons, I would like them to pay attention to the social importance of the discussed problems, to the importance of these problems in the life of a society and of each person's life apart, to the importance that dentistry should have as a profession and the dental surgeon as a professional on the social ladder of the state and society, in creation of the unique image of the dental surgeons as a very important part of the human society, whose unrealized functions could lead to the degradation of life standard in the society and of each of its member separately. Each dental surgeon should use this very factor in his activity as the main and most important argument in the relationship with the patients while performing their professional function - the prophylaxis and treatment of the dental diseases.

So, as far as our opinion is concerned, healthy teeth have three main functions in the establishment and maintenance of the high life standard of each person:

1. Healthy teeth as the main factor condition
ing man's food quality.
2. The teeth and their aesthetic role.
3. Healthy teeth as a symbol of man's property.

Let's examine more detailed the role and the importance of these teeth functions in determining a high life standard.

1. Healthy teeth and the nutrition

No doubt, that nutrition with all the variety of its components is one of the most important in the life of a person and society. It should be mentioned that the nutrition is one of the most

important criterion of the welfare of the society, its health, culture, so, also of its development level and civilization. Due to its development, the human society has passed a long and difficult way from famine to saturation, from the uniformity to the variety of food, from the raw food usage to the high preparation level, from the role of the nutrition as a life and health supporting factor to its ritual function and as one of the manifestations of man's culture. Nowadays, except its life supporting functions, nutrition has got a great many of other functions, which have an important social role.

lengthening

At the same time, perhaps, it's difficult to find another sphere of human life, which would be so varied and individualized. This is confirmed by many facts: the great variety of meals and of national cuisines, kinds of food and ways of cooking, individual habits and health influence, dependence on the financial possibilities and on the habits of some people, their culture and health state. And among all this great variety of previous facts that are conditioning man's nutrition, the most important role, sometimes-unconscious one, is played by the condition of the dento-maxillary system. The following factors of the oral cavity are important in choosing the food by man:

- a) the lack of separate teeth or a great number of them;
- b) the presence of sick teeth;
- c) teeth mobility;
- d) the state of the interdental spaces;
- e) the presence of periodontal diseases;
- f) the presence of dentures and their quality;
- g) the duration of mastication process;
- h) the aesthetics of nutrition and mastication process.

Let's examine the role and the importance of these factors in the nutrition. The lack of separate teeth or a great number of them, especially of those with mastication function and of the frontal ones, leads to the difficulty in biting the food and of its mastication. At the beginning of the process of teeth loss, the person gets adapted to it, uses mainly unilateral mastication, which considerably limits the possibility of food choice. Further, as teeth are being lost, the restricts increase and start their manifestation in the choice of soft food instead of rough and hard, prepared instead of raw, a food that could be chewed and swallowed by someone instead of desired food. It's also important that, as teeth are lost, salivation decreases (V.K. Leontiev, S.A. Popov, 1983 and others), that hinders the formation of the alimentary bolus

and burdening, in such a way, the process of food mastication.

A rather negative role in the choice of food and mastication is played by the presence of sick teeth. It leads to the pain during nourishing and mastication, food accumulation in cavities, food storage, decay and effervescence, expressed by an unpleasant smell in the mouth. The result consists in restriction of the food choice, the methods of its preparation and cooking.

The mobilization of teeth has a very negative role.

Excepting the impossibility of using rough and hard food, there is a problem of accumulation, in this case, of food remainders in the mouth. Cleaning the oral cavity becomes more and more difficult. All these, lead inevitably to restrict in food choice, its variety and ways of cooking.

In the case of loss of certain teeth, cavities on the contact surfaces, (another rather unpleasant and racking factor) appear - the accumulation of food in interdental spaces, the appearance of painful gum pockets. This factor is well known to the major part of our patients and represents the main difficulty for a qualitative treatment. The trouble is that in these cases, even when teeth are treated, but without a correct modelling of the contact zones, the patient won't feel comfortable, and more than that, he feels his helplessness (the teeth are treated, aren't they?!) and again sees only one way out - to restrict the choice of food and to treat the food well. An analogous situation, but more difficult for treatment is noticed in the case of the treatment of periodontitis in neglected forms, with the presence of deep teeth-gum pockets. In many situations the process of mastication and the choice of food could be modified by means of an effective denture. Usually it is realized by means of intercalations, crowns, small bridgelike dentures. But, in reality, in many cases non-qualitative dentures lead to difficulties met during eating and mastication of food because of the large interdental spaces, the gum inflammation leads to the retention of food, pain during the process of eating and as a result, again to the restriction of food choice, its composition and methods of preparation.

All types of removable dentures have big lacks, in this consideration. Because of its imperfection concerning the restoration of masticatory function, removable dentures *always* subdue their possessor restrictions regarding the choice of food, mainly connected with the roughness of the product, the necessity of its mastication and

other causes. That's why any removable denture always considerably limits the choice of food in all its manifestations.

Considerable restrictions in the choice of food are connected with the necessity of prolonging the mastication in case of the teeth loss or the lack of effective dentures. In this case the patient has to decide the following: either to restrict the choice of the food or to swallow not enough chewed food, or to use a long, frequent and tiresome mastication. Usually the choice is made on the first two decisions. In such a way, the necessity of a long mastication of the food in the case of the loss of the chewing function also leads to the disturbance of the food choice.

At last, here is one more important factor of the food choice dealing with man's psychology in case of the loss of teeth and denture - the loss of the aesthetics of eating. It is represented by a long mastication, difficulties in biting the food, the choice of one part of the food which is accessible for mastication, non-aesthetic mastication of the food, the necessity to remove the non-masticated part of the food, the necessity to clean the interdental spaces, etc. There is no need to neglect this part of nourishing because it also has a great importance in the choice of the nutrition and the level of food preparation.

These are the main causes, which restrict the choice of food by man, methods of its preparation and use.

There are not too many real data, proving the above-mentioned facts. Very interesting are the facts received from Latvia (1984). A special expedition examined the real nutrition of the population of different regions of Latvia. At the same, nutrition of the people with periodontal diseases was studied separately. This group has the content of albumin in food much more lower than the persons with healthy periodontium, even lower than the minimal recommended quantity. It was discovered an exact revert correlation between the albumin quantity in a daily ration and the periodontium state. The same group didn't eat enough rough vegetables and fruits, so the intake of the vitamins C and B was low. The same people used well-minced and cooked food, which is closed to the factors mentioned above.

The studies made in Omsk (V.I. Kamitzki, V.T. Stupov and others 1976) demonstrated that people with multiple dental decays start much more lately the hygiene of oral cavity than the decay-resistant people ($P < 0.01$) and are affected easier ($P < 0.01$). In case of multiple dental decays 60.9% of people masticate food unilaterally.

73.9% lament on the unpleasant smell of the mouth, an unpleasant taste in the mouth in the morning. 78.3% complains on the presence of food remainders after the meal, while the decay-resistant persons didn't have such kind of complaints ($P < 0.01$). The people with dental decays prefer soft, well-cooked food ($P < 0.01$), at the same time this kind of food predominated in their ration long before the appearance of dental decays. In the cases of multiple dental decays there is a tendency to use food of glucidic nature (95.6%) especially sugar, sweets and others. If dental decay-resisting people use sweets as the III course ($P < 0.01$), people with multiple dental decays use sweets at any time, no matter the food used, in 50% cases during night time ($P < 0.01$). People having multiple dental decays have been registered in 78.3% as not having contact points, where a large quantity of food is stored.

In such way the dento-maxillary system is a very important factor for the choice of food, its quality and kind, the degree of its preparation. The people with sick, lost or mobile teeth not only have any possibility to eat whatever they like but also suffer from the lack of vitamins and protein insufficiency, as a result of an unconscious behaviour in the choice of accessible food, develop an inactive mastication, have a degraded salivary gland function, and lack auto-cleaning function of the oral cavity. Having limited the possibilities, they become dependent on them. The result is the ebbing of life standard, concerning one of the most important indicators - nutrition. It's a pity that the connection between nutrition disturbances due to the oral cavity state, the general sickness of the body, the affection caused by some illnesses and longevity is studied insufficiently. Such studies are important and have to be done. In such a way it is indisputable that healthy teeth are a guarantee of high life standard because they reduce all the restrictions concerning one of the most important factors of man's life as the nutrition is.

As a result of all mentioned above one can draw up a very important conclusion for dental practice: the prophylaxis, the treatment of teeth and the denture having as an aim the amelioration and recovering of the oral cavity, strategically provide a high life standard. These aspects of treatment and prophylaxis should be explained to patients, this aspect has to be known and carried through by sick people as well. They should know that life standard depends on teeth state and in this case either we choose the food or the food chooses us. Knowing all these things people's attitude concerning the dental diseases,

prophylaxis and the profession of a dentist could be improved.

2. The teeth and the aesthetics

Another very important factor of teeth influence upon life standard is their importance in people's life. The expressions "a charming smile", a "Hollywood smile", "teeth like pearls", "snowy smile" and others have become synonyms of beauty and prosperity, of success and welfare. It goes without saying that we can't imagine someone to be happy and prosperous by having bad teeth and an unpleasant smile. One of the classics sayings "If smile smartens up man's face, it's wonderful". There are some components, which contribute for someone to have good teeth.

First, the teeth should keep their natural place, without any exceptions; second, they should have a natural shining colour; third, they must have a nice shape, proper dimensions; fourth, teeth should possess one of the physiological forms of the articulation; fifth, they should have a nice and harmonious look during speech and smile, sixth, teeth should have a harmonious combination with the face shape, the smile. Such cases are rare. That's why to keep them during the whole lifetime is a very important thing.

The dentistry performances, the appearance of new technologies, materials, treatment methods, have been separated in a special branch - aesthetic dentistry. This dental sub-branch has appeared as a result of people's aesthetic demands as a factor of their image formation, symbol of their welfare and success, beauty and of their high social status. That's why the services of aesthetic dentistry are very deficient, request a great volume of work, complicity, the materials and equipment used are very expensive and are accessible for rich and prosperous people. Beautiful teeth in a developed society have become a symbol of welfare and of a high life standard. In order to have a charming smile and to keep the teeth in a good state many people don't spare any financial means. That's why the aesthetic dentistry has found a wide spread in prosperous countries, where the life standard is high, where people have enough money to pay for such difficult interventions.

This process has also started in our country although the demand of such services is not so high and we have got only a few spe-

cialists. Probably this process will increase in our country at the same time with the increase of prosperous people and as a result, the demand in aesthetic dentistry will grow up. In this meaning a good example is the USA and other "rich" countries. There, simultaneously with the life standard growth, the prophylaxis of dental diseases and the decrease of dental diseases have immediately grown up the demands of aesthetic dental services, which permitted not only to keep the initial number of dentists but even to raise their salaries.

In such a way the teeth aesthetics while smiling is one of the main indicators of life standard in a society. This factor should be retained by the dental surgeons and it should be taken under consideration. The branch of the aesthetic dentistry will develop simultaneously with the growth of the life standard of the society, becoming one of the most important indicators of life standard.

3. Healthy teeth as a symbol of prosperity of people and society

During the last quarter of the century the world medicine has achieved great success in the sphere of health protection, prophylaxis of keeping an active longevity. It goes without saying that the genetic factors and a healthy life style are the main causes that provide longevity and man's health. Due to the etiological and pathogenic prophylaxis many diseases could be prevented, permitting to considerably prolonge people's life from many states of the world. The great majority of the developed states accept indisputably a healthy way of life and the prophylaxis of the diseases as the main measures for maintaining health and longevity. It has become a "modern" phenomenon to be healthy and to have a high work efficiency until becoming old.

Good results were achieved especially in the dentistry branch. The countries where have been successfully realizing the prophylaxis programs, the dentistry diseases decreased by 2-4 times, children of 12 years old have the DMF index maximum from 1.0 up to 2.0. An objective was set that at by the age of 70 years old, people should keep 20 teeth. People understand that the problem of healthy teeth depends on them, that the loss of teeth and removable dentures are not typical for the advanced age, they could be avoided and as a result one could enjoy

life pleasures until an old, old age.

Keeping healthy teeth in elderly people gives the possibility to avoid such unpleasant moments of old age, such as chronic infections of the oral cavity, unpleasant smell, restrictions in nutrition, toothless smile, removable dentures.

So, the keeping of healthy teeth is one of the most important features of high life standard, because they provide a valuable nutrition, an aesthetic aspect, one's pride and dignity, an active form of living. Of course, keeping healthy teeth demands great efforts and expenses done by the state and by each person individually. Without sufficient financial and organizing measures, as well as other measures it is impossible to realize the necessary success and to provide the importance of healthy teeth until an old age as a confirmation of a high life standard of people and society.

To our opinion, there is other less important connections between dentistry and life standard of the society, but the above-mentioned examples are demonstrating the whole social importance of the discussed subject. Which are the conclusions and the recommendations triggered as a result of the presented materials? Some directions have been outlined.

1. The Russian society and government must know and understand the importance of dentistry in people's health protection and in provisioning high life standard.
2. Each Russian citizen should be educated in a healthy way of living, including the prophylaxis of oral cavity. That's why each person must know and accept as a vital necessity the notion concerning the connection between life standard and teeth health state.
3. The notion concerning the mutual connection between life standard and healthy teeth must become an important ideology in the relation between the dentist and the patients, communities and society. In this meaning the role-played by the dental surgeon in the society should be revised and the latter should have a more imposing image. With this purpose all the programs for the professional preparation of the specialists must be seriously modified, as they could understand their role in the society and state. Concretely, this should be expressed by a new step of communication between the dental surgeon and his patients, by setting higher goals and objectives also by the dental surgeons and by the patients.
4. The mass dentistry organizations, the leaders of the Russian Dentistry Association, the regional dentistry administration should revise their interrelations with the society, to set up higher strategic goals, occupy more active political positions, providing in such a way a new image of the specialty and its important role in the life of the society. Such a transfer to an active position will require long term efforts, rational plans, a serious advertising, but the most important thing - a more active position of each member of our dentistry corporation in his activity with the patients. Such an approach will require a serious revision of the whole complex of relationships between the dental surgeons and the society, but the new goal justifies the means, which will be invested for its realization.

Correspondence to: Prof. V.K. Leontiev, correspondent member of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, President of the Dentistry Association of Russia; Novy Arbat, 34, Moscow, 121099 Russia, fax: 007-095-2466078, e-mail: staru@orc.ru