

Be Aware of Profusion!

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October appears a most popular month for HEALTH AWARENESS ...there is scarcely a day which is not allocated to the recognition of a particular project, illness or community challenge.

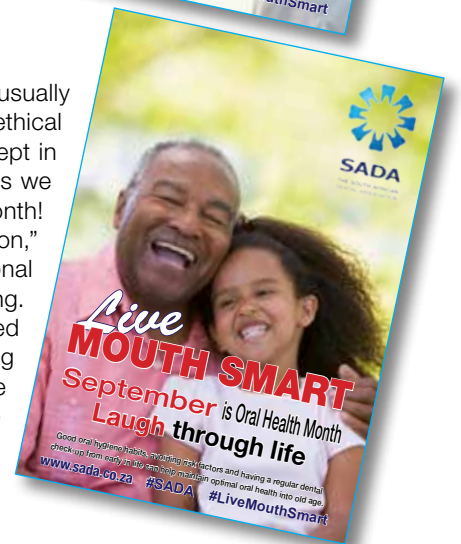
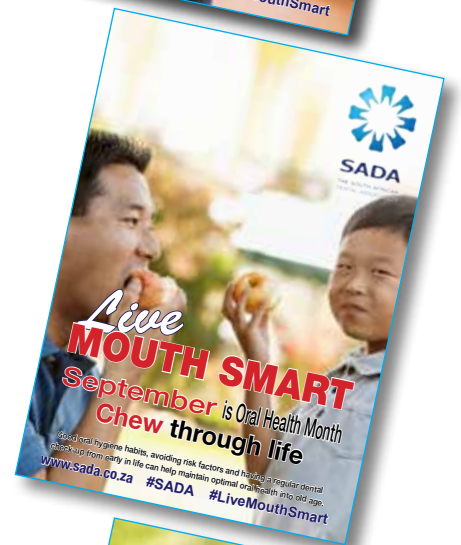
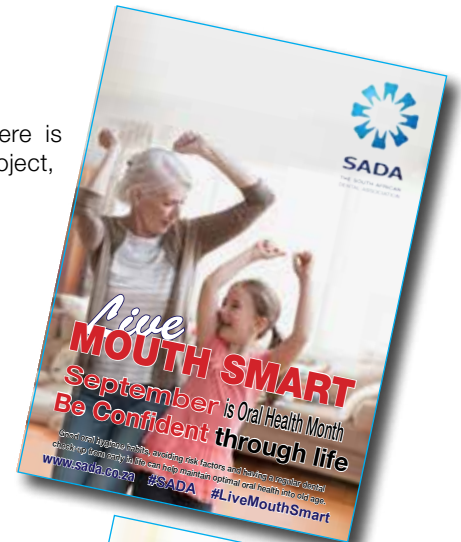
October

- 1 International Day for Older Persons
- 1 National Inherited Disorder Day
- 9 International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
- 9-15 National Nutrition Week
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 12 World Sight Day
- 10 World Hospice and Palliative Care Day
- 11-17 Case Manager Week
- 12 World Arthritis Day
- 12-20 World Bone and Joint Week
- 15 National Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day
- 15-19 National Obesity Week
- 16 World Food Day
- 16 World Spine Day
- 17 World Trauma Day
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 20 National Down Syndrome Day
- 20 World Osteoporosis Day
- 20-26 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week
- 23 National Iodine Deficiency Disorder Day
- 24 World Polio Day
- 25 World Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Day
- 28-3Nov World Stroke Week
- 29 World Stroke Day
- 30 Commemoration of African Food and Nutrition Security Day.

Wikipedia defines a National or International Day or observance as : “a date usually set by a major organisation or Government to commemorate a public health or ethical cause of importance on a national or international level.” Bearing that concept in mind, it is perhaps salutary to again consider the breadth of health problems we are asked to observe, commemorate, and, hopefully, manage – all in one month! Ranging from problems affecting the infant to a recognition of the “older person,” from joints and bones through to toxic substances and overeating... and, National Obesity Week is juxtaposed with World Food Day! The **profusion** is confusing. The question has to be posed; just how effective are all these well intentioned endeavours? The Association commits to a time of frenzied activity during the National Oral Health Month in September... four weeks out of 52. Yet the message is widely broadcast, the community made aware and at least some

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of the information must have lasting impact. And we



can do it all over again next year to remind and reinforce. On balance it must be recognised that it is a privilege that for a full month the focus of the nation is on the central objective of the profession, PREVENTION. The Association was fully committed in September. Oral Health is indeed possible for all. Constant awareness is the solution, stimulated annually.

Intrigued by the plethora of Awareness Days and Months, and suspecting that establishing such a dedicated calendar slot would surely involve much paperwork and foot slogging, I sought guidance from the Web. And indeed did find a reference to Senate having giving approval for one such project... BUT no more guidance came to light. There was indeed much comment on those Awareness endeavours which are already there but no advice on the method of creating that special slot on the National calendar. Elsewhere, however, came an entry which intriguingly, provides eight steps to follow when creating your own Awareness Day:

1. Choose the right date.
2. Make it interesting.
3. Promote in the right places.
4. Make use of the Internet.
5. Hire a PR Agency.
6. Have a celebrity on board.
7. Be active on the Day.
8. Plan for next year.

(At a glance through that list it may occur to the reader that the Journal actually meets many of those guidelines... even to having a celebrity on board, for every author is an aspiring celebrity! And yes, we make use of the Internet, even though the change has not been that popular!)

Those guidelines may sound rather intensive and demanding lots of commitment. A far more practical way is to simply take a determined decision to have your own Journal Awareness Day (Days, Week, etc).

On that day there will be an acute awareness of the papers published in the Journal of your choice. Read, digest and apply. What better use of an Awareness Day! On just such a Journal Awareness Day will this issue of the SADJ hold the attention of those brave enough to attempt endodontics on a tooth with an open apex, of those who know that the essence of epidemiology is to have control over the sample (prison inmates meet that criterion, even when all signed Informed Consent!), of those seeking development of diagnostic prowess in Oral Medicine and in Maxillo-facial radiology. The discipline of allocating and reserving a special time for your journal reading will confer so many advantages.

Perhaps in these times of political uncertainty, of petrol price increases, of looming NHI challenges, of enhanced central control over dental practice, there may be some sense in creating a Day of Unrestricted Joy and Happiness. Or should we call it a Day of Unequivocal Escapism?

