

Dear reader,



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Yours sincerely,

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## An overwhelming task



Dr Diah Ayu Maharani  
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The implementation of a universal health care scheme in January is widely considered a significant step forward for increasing the quality and access to medicines and medical treatment for the entire Indonesian population. Policy-makers are committed to covering every citizen through the reform by 2019. But how may the recent introduction of universal health care coverage affect dentistry? Providing dental care to 240 million people who are widely geographically dispersed appears to be an overwhelming task. All stakeholders in Indonesia's dental sector, including politicians, health care providers, and dental manufacturers and distributors, are now facing the critical task of having to redefine their role within this changing environment.

The latest figures demonstrate that the prevalence of dental dis-

eases in the country remains considerably high. Previous government policies have not improved the oral health of Indonesians significantly. Universal health care coverage may reduce the economic barriers to accessing dental care, which will improve the country's overall oral health status.

These efforts however will not diminish the uneven distribution of dental care services. At the moment, they are primarily concentrated in the western part of the country. Owing to this disparity, citizens who live in remote areas in the central and eastern parts of Indonesia have very limited access to a dentist.

Universal health care coverage is expected to increase dental care utilisation at public facilities, particularly primary care facilities, by the poor. Concerns of the Ministry of Health concerning the poor state of Indonesia's health care facilities have encouraged the government to focus on better access to care. At the same time, the Ministry of Health aims to improve the quality

of care, as it would not make sense to provide health care to everyone in the country if the quality remains poor.

The professionalism of dental health practitioners depends not only on their skills but also largely on the quality and availability of dental equipment. Currently, the majority of dental instruments and materials in Indonesia are imported. The absence of local production of and price control regulations on dental instruments and materials might cause high and unstable costs, which could place the long-term success of universal health care coverage at risk. Analysing and overcoming these challenges is necessary to achieve efficient and effective dental care in the future. DT

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