UK dental schools come out on top in global ranking

By DTI

LONDON, UK/SHANGHAI, China: In a new global survey, four schools in the UK have been ranked as some of the world’s top institutions for dental education. Among the top 50 dental schools worldwide, as ranked by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, were departments from the University of Birmingham, the University of Manchester, the University College London and King’s College London (KCL) whose Dental Institute was ranked seventh—the highest of all the UK-based institutions.

In a similar survey published by QS World University Rankings in London last year, KCL was ranked among the four best dental schools in the world. According to the institute’s executive dean, Professor Mark Woolford, these new results reaffirm the institution’s position as a world-class institution and reflect the dedication, commitment and innovation of their academic and professional staff, students and alumni.

“King’s places great importance on the research carried out in the Dental Institute,” Woolford commented. “It is the clear top dental school for research outside North America using metrics that are based on measurable outcomes”

This year’s ranking of dental schools saw an overwhelming dominance of American institutions, with eight out of ten of the highest-ranked schools based in the US. Besides the KCL Dental Institute, the only other dental school not based in the UK that was ranked in the top ten, was the University of Sao Paolo in Brazil. In addition to the UK, Brazil, the Netherlands and Canada saw a significant number of their dental schools ranked high in the survey. The University of Michigan School of Dentistry, which is also one of the oldest dental institutions in the world, was named the top school globally.

DDU: Mobile devices pose security risk in dental practice

By DTI

LONDON, UK: The Dental Defence Union (DDU) in London has cautioned dentists not to take and store clinical photographs on mobile devices like smartphones or tablets. In view of the recent cyber-attacks on NHS systems in the country, the organisation also advised practices to have an information security policy in place on all their computers, as well as a designated person appointed to oversee data protection.

Back in May, a global ransomware attack brought disruption to NHS systems nationwide. Although patient data was not exposed, according to authorities, details of thousands of NHS staff were stolen in the process.

While taking clinical photographs can be useful for treatment planning and protecting oneself from patient complaints, storing them on a mobile device could be a breach of the Data Protection Act, even if that data is subsequently transferred to the patient record system and deleted from the personal device, explained(dentist) -legal adviser David Lauder in an editorial published in the latest DDU journal issue.

Instead, he said practices are advised to use a dedicated clinical camera that can be stored away securely in the practice and to always seek written consent to the use of the photographs from their patients in order to avoid possible legal consequences.

“The impact that mobile devices have had on society is undeniable. As they become an increasingly common part of our daily lives, it is understandable that many practitioners use them in the dental surgery,” Lauder wrote. “But because of the legal considerations associated with the protection of personal data, and the potential for mobile devices to be lost or stolen, it would be wise to avoid taking clinical photographs on a mobile phone.”

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, clinical photographs of patients, even when unidentifiable, are considered personal confidential data. A breach can lead to fines being issued by either the General Dental Council or the employer.
“Say cheese!”

Glaswegians attempt Guinness record with world’s largest smile

By DTI

GLASGOW, UK: Contrary to common belief, research suggests that people in Glasgow are among those in Britain who smile the most. This surprising finding was recently underlined by students and staff of the University of Glasgow who joined pupils and teachers from the area in an attempt to set a new Guinness record by forming the world’s biggest smile.

The event in June brought together over 1,000 participants at the Scottish Event Campus, formerly the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, in an effort to raise awareness of oral health. Participants wore red and white ponchos in order to form the lips and teeth of a giant smile. The attempt is now awaiting verification for recognition as a Guinness World Record. If successful, it will join records like the world’s largest smile formed by people in Manila in the Philippines in 2015.

According to the head of the University of Glasgow dental school Prof Jeremy Ibbig, the event successfully highlighted the important message of maintaining oral health. “The event has been a huge amount of fun to organise and our sincere thanks go to all of the many partners and organisations involved who helped to make this happen. I am delighted that we were able to achieve our aim of assembling 1,000 participants in the shape of a big smile as Glasgow’s contribution to National Smile Month and I sincerely hope that Guinness World Records will verify this as the world’s biggest smile,” he said.

Congratulating the organisers on their achievement, Head of the Evidence for Action Team at NHS Scotland and consultant in general dental public health Dr Cohan Jones stated that while oral health has improved throughout Scotland through programmes like Childsmile, children living in poorer areas are still more likely to suffer from dental caries. “Events like the one organised today allow us to remind people that tooth decay is almost entirely preventable,” he said.

Organised by the university’s School of Dentistry, the Guinness World Record attempt received support by the city of Glasgow, NIS Scotland and the British and Irish Dental Society. “It was part of this year’s National Smile Month, which is run by oral health charity the Oral Health Foundation in London and took place from 15 May to 15 June with plenty of activities centring on oral health throughout the country. Students and staff of the University of Glasgow were joined by pupils and teachers from the area to form the world’s biggest smile.”

Study confirms virtual reality improves patient satisfaction

By DTI

DEVON, UK: Though the use of virtual reality (VR) in dentistry is steadily growing, variation in its efficacy due to differing VR environments has rarely been measured. A new study conducted by a team from the universities of Plymouth, Exeter and Birmingham—in conjunction with Torrington Dental Practice in Devon—has found that dental patients enjoy an overall better experience when engaged in a VR walk in a coastal area than in a city.

Patients who agreed to the study were randomly assigned to three separate situations: conventionally performed procedures without VR, a walk around a virtual, but anonymous city or a walk along the coastline of Devon’s Wembury Beach. Patients chosen for the last two groups were provided with a headset and handheld controls.

The study found that the group who virtually walked along the coastline experienced the least amount of pain and recollected their treatment as such. These findings were not evident in the group who engaged with the cityscape VR.

“The use of virtual reality in health care settings is on the rise but we need more rigorous evidence of whether it actually improves patient experiences,” said Dr Karin Tanja Oskjær, lead author of the study.

Our research demonstrates that under the right conditions, this technology can be used to help both patients and practitioners.” The study authors emphasised that the VR environment patients engage with is crucial to reducing their pain and anxiety when visiting the dentist. “That walking around the virtual city did not improve outcomes shows that merely distracting the patients isn’t enough; the environment for a patient’s visit needs to be welcoming and relaxing,” said Dr Sabine Pabi, coordinator of the study at Plymouth University.

“It would be interesting to apply this approach to other contexts in which people cannot easily access real nature such as the workplace or other healthcare situations.”
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FRESH BREATH

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Surge of honours for dentists in Queen’s list

By DTI

LONDON, UK: A former Deputy chief Dental Officer, a prominent orthodontist and a dental philanthropist have been named in the 2017 Queen’s Birthday Honours. Appointed to the Order of the British Empire, among other dental professionals, were Prof. Nigel Hunt from the UCL Eastman Dental Institute in London and Dr Linda Greenwall in Hampstead.

An authority on tooth whitening and aesthetic dentistry, Greenwall lectures extensively, in addition to running a multidisciplinary private practice. She is also founder of the British Dental Bleaching Society and the Dental Wellness Trust charity, which aims to promote good oral health in less fortunate communities around the world.

Hunt has been a professor and Head of the Department of Orthodontics at the UCL Eastman Dental Institute since 1998. There, he also leads a research team in the field of craniofacial reconstruction and tissue engineering. Previously, he served as President of the British Orthodontic Society and Dean of the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Also recognised for her contributions to dentistry was Dr Serbijn Kaur from Park View Dental Practice in Leicester. She served as Deputy Chief Dental Officer for England under Dr Barry Cockcroft from 2008 to 2015. Further honours recipients were Margaret Katherine Ross, Programme Director for the Bachelor of Science in Oral Health Sciences at the Edinburgh Dental Institute, and Dawn Ailsa Adams, Clinical Director of Community Dental Services at NHS Fife.

Every year, the Queen’s Birthday list recognises members of the public in Britain for their contributions to various fields. This year’s list saw honours awarded to over 1,000 people, including Sir Paul McCartney, MBE, J. K. Rowling, CBE, and comedian Billy Connolly, CBE, among others.

State-of-the-art dental education centre opens in Bradford

By DTI

BRADFORD, UK: A £500,000 state-of-the-art dental education and training facility opened in less fortunate communities around the world.

Wellness Trust charity, which aims to promote good oral health in less fortunate communities around the world.

The high-spec facility is a joint enterprise between Bradford College and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and is housed in the college’s £10 million Advanced Technology Centre (NORDEC) will also provide apprentice- ship for those seeking employ- ment in the dental industry.

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State-of-the-art Dental Institute opens in Bradford

By DTI

BRADFORD, UK: A £500,000 state-of-the-art education and training facility opens in Bradford. The centre was opened by MP Andy Welsh, CEO of the Bradford College Group, said: “We are delighted to be working with the Northern Dental Education Centre (NORDEC) to deliver high-quality training to the dental profession. NORDEC is dedicated to the task of training dental healthcare professionals, driving clinical standards and improving clinical leadership through opportunities for continuous professional development.”

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DSC appoints Sheffield dental school dean as new chair

By DTI

LONDON, UK: The Dean of the University of Sheffield’s School of Clinical Dentistry, Prof. Chris Deery, has been appointed as the new chair of the Dental Schools Council (DSC). He is succeeding Prof. Callum Youngson, the head of the School of Dentistry at the University of Liverpool, who has been leading the organisation since 2014.

Commenting on his appointment, Deery said owing to an increase in the number of clinical dental academics, as demonstrated by a recent survey, the opportunities to conduct dental research must be increased. More must also be done to provide support for those who work in clinical academia, which will require collaboration from organisations across the sector, according to Deery.

“Professor Youngson has done a fantastic job leading the Council for the last few years,” he said. “I look forward to continuing this work alongside my dental school colleagues and our colleagues from across dental healthcare.”

“We have seen great strides in public dental health over the last decade and these strides are in large part down to the quality of our dental school graduates,” he added.

Also working as Programme Director for the MClDent in Paediatric Dentistry, the Clinical Lead for Paediatric Dentistry and Associate Clinical Director at the University of Sheffield, Deery joined the University of Sheffield as paediatric dentistry professor in 2006. Since 2015, he has been holding the position of Dean at NHS Fife.

Among other positions, Deery also serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Paediatric Dentistry published by John Wiley & Sons and as Chair of the Consultants in Paediatric Dentistry Group.

The Dental School Council represents all 18 dental schools in the UK and three in Ireland.