Global mercury treaty to be put into force

By DTI
BRUSSELS, Belgium: The European Union, together with seven of its member states, has ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury and subsequently provided the clenching votes needed to bring it into force. The international agreement aims to protect both humans and the environment from the negative effects of mercury and mercury compounds, and its ratification is seen as a crucial step in achieving this.

The Minamata Convention was signed in October 2013 under the United Nations Environment Programme. It was named in honour of the Japanese city of Minamata, where thousands of people were poisoned as a result of dumped wastewater containing methylmercury. Though 128 countries have already signed it, the treaty needed to be ratified by 50 countries to enter into force. With the ratification provided by the EU and seven member states—Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden—the total number of signatories reached 51, resulting in its enactment.

Owing to its ratification, the Minamata Convention will now become legally binding and Sweden—the total number of signatories is now 77 member states—Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden—the total number of signatories reached 51, resulting in its enactment.

HPV vaccination may lower risk of oral infections that cause mouth cancer

By DTI
CHICAGO, USA: A study conducted in the US has found that the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine may help reduce oral infections that cause mouth cancer.

Using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the study looked at self-reported records of 6,627 young adults, aged 18–33, during the period 2001–2014 and compared those who had received one or more doses of an HPV vaccine with those who had not. Focusing on the prevalence of HPV 16, 18, 6 and 11—the four types covered by HPV vaccines prior to 2016—oral rinse samples collected by mobile health facilities were tested for the virus in Gillion’s lab.

According to the results, the HPV strains investigated were found in far fewer people who had received vaccine shots, demonstrating an 88 per cent lower risk. At the time of data collection, around 18.3 per cent of young adults in the US reported receiving one or more vaccine doses before age 26, with vaccinations more common in women than men (29.2 vs. 6.9 per cent).

“When we compared the prevalence in vaccinated men to non-vaccinated men, we didn’t detect any infections in vaccinated men. The data suggests that the vaccine may be reducing the prevalence of those infections by as much as 100 per cent,” said Gillion.

Approved in 2006 to prevent cervical cancers in women, and later for other cancers, including anal cancer in men, negative stigma around the HPV vaccine being used only to prevent sexually transmitted infections and not cancer has meant gaining acceptance and awareness has been slow. Actor Michael Douglas raised the issue publicly several years ago, when he blamed his cancer on it.

Oral sex has been regarded as the main risk factor for contracting an HPV infection in the mouth or throat, according to Gillion. She explained, however, that oral sex does not give one cancer. The infection in rare cases can develop into cancer over many years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 63 per cent of adolescent girls and 50 per cent of adolescent boys have started with the HPV vaccine series throughout the US Nationwide, there are an estimated 3,200 new cases of HPV-associated oropharyngeal cancers diagnosed in women and about 13,200 diagnosed in men each year.

Drug-related oral health problems investigated

By DT Asia Pacific
BRISBANE, Australia: People with substance use disorders are more prone to dental caries and periodontal disease than the general population, as well as less likely to receive regular dental care. Hence, the oral health of these patients is a particular challenge for dentists. A new review study has now aimed to examine drug-associated oral health problems and ways for dental professionals to improve these patients’ oral health.

“Dentists should screen their patients for substance use, notice any advanced dental or periodontal disease inconsistent with a patient’s age and consider referral to medical doctors for management,” Baghaie said. In addition, dentists should be aware of issues concerning treatment and consent when the patient is intoxicated and be alert to the possibility of resistance to painkillers, he emphasised.

“Generally, doctors and clinicians who care for people with substance use disorders should screen for oral disease and warn patients of the oral health risks associated with xerostomia and cravings for sweet foods,” Baghaie added.

The review combined the results of 28 studies from around the world, which collectively provided data on 4,896 patients with substance use disorders. The findings indicated that one in 10 people between the ages of 19 and 64 use drugs each year, with approximately 10 per cent of this number having drug dependence or substance use disorders.

The findings mirror those of increased dental caries and periodontal disease in people with severe mental illness, eating disorders and alcohol use disorders, compared with the general population.