Regional declaration on amalgam phase-out signed in Bangladesh

Asia poised to become first continent free from dental mercury waste

DT Asia Pacific:

Dhaka, Bangladesh: Representatives of dental and civil society organisations in Asia recently signed a declaration in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that calls for a phase-out of dental fillings containing mercury throughout the region. The agreement also aims for the cease of trade in amalgam and to educate dental professionals about mercury-free alternatives, such as Atraumatic Restorative Treatments.

Use of amalgam in the treatment of children and pregnant women is to be prohibited already this year, the paper states. It also strives for developing measures to raise public awareness about the environmental hazards of amalgam and to help hospitals and dental institutions continent wide to provide mercury-free dental health care services. An overall phase-out of amalgam in dentistry in Asia is targeted for 2020.

Signed by dental representatives from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the declaration is considered a practical step towards implementing the Minamata Convention on Mercury, an international agreement signed by 87 countries two years ago in Japan that has banned the use of the element.

Dentures pose health risk during sleep

Japanese researchers have found that people who wear dentures at night are at an increased risk of pneumonia. According to their study, patients who wore their dentures during sleep were at a 2.5-fold risk of developing the condition compared with those of a control group who removed their dentures before they went to bed. Denture wearers were also more likely to suffer dental inflammation, Candida albicans, as well as periodontal inflammation.

The study conducted at the Nihon University’s School of Dentistry and Keio University’s School of Medicine in Tokyo examined 228 men and 296 women aged 85 to bed. Denture wearers were at a 2.3-fold risk of developing the condition compared with those of a control group who removed their dentures before they went to bed. Denture wearers were also more likely to suffer dental inflammation, Candida albicans, as well as periodontal inflammation.

Dental icon dies at 85

The father of the modern dental implant, Per-Ingvar Bränemark, has died at age 85 in his hometown of Gothenburg in Sweden from a heart attack. He leaves behind his wife, three children and four grandchildren.

A physician and dedicated researcher, Bränemark accidently discovered how to anchor titanium in bone, a process known as osseointegration, when studying the effects of blood flow on bone healing. He successfully placed the first titanium implant in the mid-1960s in a Swedish patient with several jaw deformities and missing teeth. His invention was approved by Swedish health authorities in the early 1970s. It is still sold today as the Bränemark system by Nobel Biocare.

During his lifetime, Bränemark received several honours, including the Swedish Society of Medicine’s Söderberg Prize and the European Inventor Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Dr. John Williams and colleagues from the Colorado State University in the US demonstrating a device that could allow deaf patients to hear with their tongue.

The declaration was formulated last November in Dhaka. (Photo OSVSWA, India)
substance in industrial products like batteries and fluorescent lamps, on the continent. Although amalgam is generally exempt from the ban, the convention recommended phasing down its use in dentistry worldwide.

While mercury-free dentistry is growing even in rural parts of India, Pattanaik said, more than 70 per cent of dentists in the country are still using it as their primary filling material. The widespread use results in 85 tons of amalgam waste per year, while, despite new initiatives to educate dentists about the benefits of amalgam separators, is released into the environment. It is then transformed into methylmercury, a highly toxic form of the metal that poses health risks to wildlife and human beings.

“The large number of dental practitioners and dental professionals both in the private and government sectors are unaware of these things and required to be sensitised to avoid amalgam disposal through the normal sewer system,” Prof. Mahesh Verma, Indian Dental Association President and Director and Principal of the Manipal Azaad Institute of Dentistry Sciences in New Delhi, told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific.

Religious practices like Hindu cremations further add to the environmental problem, as they release mercury from dental fillings into the air.

While the environmental effects of amalgam waste in Asia remain largely unknown, it is believed that the continent contributes significantly to the overall global burden. According to a 2015 report released by the United Nations Environment Programme, amalgam waste entering the solid waste stream amounts to 540 tons worldwide.

Total emissions of mercury resulting from cremation of human remains were estimated at 5.6 tons.

“The amalgam is a primitive, polluting product whose high metal content leads to cracked teeth. It is so old that it pre-dates the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. It has no role in 21st-century dentistry and it is generally rejected among younger and more modern dentists,” he commented.

From right to left: Marc Revize and Elsa Cayat and fellow journalist Antonin Fochetti (Photo Archive)

Dr Marc Revize, Scientific Editor, Dental Tribune France

Elsa Cayat was killed along with 11 of her colleagues, in the attack against French newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris on 7 January 2015. She leaves behind a 22-year-old daughter.

Elsa worked as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. She had her internship at the age of 22. “Charlie Divan” was the name of the column she wrote for Charlie Hebdo. She also published two books, Un homme + une femme = quoi ? [A Man + A Woman = What?] and Le Désir et la putain [Desire and the Whore]. In a twist of irony, we had been working together on an essay about death, transmission and love over the past year. Parental authority and the lasting damage it can cause was also one of her favourite themes.

Although a free spirit, Elsa was always attentive. Her very special laugh was distinctive. Her enthusiasm and lust for life could be felt when she would say, “Sooooo, what’s new with you?”.

Open to many things, she loved to flourish through the Dental Tribune that I would sometimes leave on her desk. On 5 June 2014, we celebrated the release of Patrick Pelloux’s book On ne vit qu’une fois! [You only live once!] with Charlie Hebdo editor Stéphane Charbonnier and the rest of the Charlie Hebdo team.