News & Opinions

DH funds vCJD research

The Department of Health is funding research to determine whether dental treatment is a risk factor for variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

The first year of the research study will be carried out at the National Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance Unit (NCJDSU) in Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow Dental Hospital and School.

The study has the support of the NHS, Chief Dental Officers, British Dental Association, General Dental Council and defence societies.

Serbhit Kaur, head of quality and standards from the Department of Health’s dental team said: ‘The aim of the study is to determine whether there are any temporal and geographic vCJD infection patterns that would indicate that dental surgery and treatment is a risk factor in cross infection when compared with a control (non infected) cohort.’

He added: ‘Of primary interest are surgical/invasive procedures, although all types of treatment will be recorded. Information gathered from cases and controls will be collected by a dental professional on a standardised data collection form by attending dental practices or requesting copies of full treatment histories. Incomplete or unavailable dental histories will be accessed through the NHS dental payment scheme.’

Researchers will carry out statistical analysis and compare results to determine whether there is a link between dental treatment and vCJD.

GDC rolls out new proposals

All dental professionals will have to have ‘adequate and appropriate insurance’ by law so patients can claim compensation if they need to, according to a new proposal by the General Dental Council.

The General Dental Council (GDC) is currently carrying out an indemnity consultation.

The GDC already requires all dental professionals to have adequate and appropriate insurance.

This professional requirement has been in place for many years and is currently upheld through the GDC’s fitness to practise procedures.

It is now looking at using new powers to make legally binding rules about ‘adequate and appropriate insurance’.

The only adequate and appropriate arrangements recognised by the GDC are dental defence organisation membership, professional indemnity insurance held by a professional or their employer or NHS indemnity.

A spokeswoman for the GDC said: ‘The consultation aims to gather views on the essential minimum requirements for each of these three types of arrangements. There will be further consultations to consider other important issues at a later date, such as the question of whether a dental professional can rely on arrangements made by an employer, or must have their own cover.’

European guide for dentists

The Council of European Dentists (CED) has updated its guide on the training, work, requirements for dental professionals wanting to work in other EU member states.

The latest edition of the EU Manual of Dental Practice looks at the legal and ethical regulations, dental training requirements, oral health systems and the organisation of dental practice in 32 European (EU and EEA) countries, including Croatia, which is due to join the EU next year.

Author of the guide, Dr Anthony Kravitz said: ‘There has been considerable interest from dentists and government officials about the organisation of dentistry in the EU and we believe this guide addresses all the professional issues that dentists need to take on board to make the move to practise in another country as hassle-free as possible.’

The guide also compares the regulatory frameworks in the different countries and provides country specific information on the dental specialties that are recognised, along with details of where such training is available and its duration.

The guide also contains information on other dental care professionals, with a list of those which are recognised, their training, the procedures they are allowed to perform, and how their decisions would impact on the professional lives of this group of DCP (Dental Care Professionals) registrants.


BSDHT Oral Health Conference

Nearly a thousand people turned up to the recent annual conference held by the British Society of Dental Hygiene & Therapy.

Delegates took part in over 14 workshops and visited 57 trade stands at the BSDHT annual oral health conference and exhibition held at the International Conference Centre in Edinburgh.

A BSDHT spokesman said: ‘This was the most well attended BSDHT conference to date reflecting UK dental hygienists and therapists’ passion and dedication for their profession.’

She added: ‘A very tangible two-day filling was sandwiched between the official opening by Margie Taylor, Chief Dental Officer of Scotland and General Dental Council president, Dr Helen Mathewsson, whose closing clarified the Council’s role in dentistry and how its decisions would impact on the professional lives of members.’