Dental units on the move

The first national oral health improvement project, which aims to improve dental health for young children in Wales is being rolled out with the help of a fleet of mobile dental units.

The scheme, which was launched by First Minister Rhodri Morgan, involves a team of dental health support workers giving out toothbrushes and toothpaste to school children along with oral health advice.

Part of the service will be delivered via mobile dental health units that will play a key role in providing specialist preventive care and treatment to schools.

The Designed to Smile programme was announced last year by Health Minister Edwina Hart and has already been running on a much smaller scale.

It will now be rolled out through two super pilots in North and South Wales. Children in nursery, reception and year one classes in schools, in areas deemed to be of greatest oral health need, will be visited by the dental fleet.

Over 500 schools are expected to benefit from the scheme during their rollout over the next three years.

Welsh children have the worst rates of tooth decay in the UK. On average, a five-year-old in Wales has between two and three decayed, missing or filled teeth, compared to less than two in Great Britain as a whole.

The First Minister Rhodri Morgan said: ‘Bites of tooth decay are far too high in Wales given that it is almost a preventable disease.’

‘This programme recognises that extra level of oral health problems we face in Wales. Through ‘Designed to Smile’ we hope to improve the level of preventative care and treatment to children in Wales so that we can reduce the number of children receiving dental care from all schools.

Health Minister Edwina Hart said: ‘This programme will help meet our One Wales commitment to provide a new public health focus on dentistry and ensure that children are given the tools they need to maintain good oral health.’

The British Dental Association (BDA) Wales welcomed the initiative. Stuart Geddes, BDA Director for Wales, said: ‘There is clearly much work to be done to improve the oral health of Wales’ children and this fleet of mobile dental units is a good way of taking oral health education message to those who might not normally receive them.

The British Dental Association (BDA) Wales welcomed the initiative. Stuart Geddes, BDA Director for Wales, said: ‘There is clearly much work to be done to improve the oral health of Wales’ children and this fleet of mobile dental units is a good way of taking oral health education message to those who might not normally receive them.

The designing of the fleet was led by Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust called the programme a ‘very welcome Welsh Assembly Government development’ and said it ‘will enable the Community Dental Service to really make a difference by reducing dental decay levels in children. We have now appointed the ‘Designed to Smile’ team and they are already busily working in schools and with parent groups to get the message across that healthy teeth are important.’

While Dr Michelle Seager programme lead for Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust said: ‘We are pleased to have been chosen by the Welsh Assembly Government to be one of the super pilot areas. Working alongside Cardiff and Vale Community Dental Service we have developed a brand image and some great resources to help make toothbrushing fun.’

‘Designed to Smile’ is a Welsh Assembly Government funded scheme that forms part of a national oral health action plan for Wales.

Total funding of £4.6 million for the action plan is expected to be made available till at least 2010/11.


dental schools to join hands

For the first time, three dental schools have joined forces to develop joint research opportunities.

Cardiff University’s School of Dentistry, the Peninsula Dental School in Exeter and the dental school at University of Bristol have formed the South West & Wales Dental Schools’ Research Symposium.

The initiative is designed to develop research excellence and open up more avenues of funding.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, dean of the School of Dentistry at Cardiff, said: ‘Developing research that impacts positively, regionally and globally depends on the sharing of knowledge across the profession to advance treatments that produce real results for patients.’

The School of Dentistry is the only one of its type in Wales, providing unique and important leadership in dental research, teaching and patient care. We are very excited to be able to be part of this symposium which is the start of strengthening research collaborations across the three institutions.’

Professor Liz Kay, dean at the Peninsula Dental School, believes that the three institutions bring ‘knowledge, skills and expertise that can make South West and the West Country an international centre for dental research of the highest quality’.

While Professor Jonathan Sandy, head of Bristol Dental School, commented: ‘There is now a realization that Schools need to collaborate to maximize their research potential. The three Dental Schools cover an area which accounts for 10 per cent of the UK population which should enable translational research on the basic and population sciences.’

One of the key messages to get through is the importance of visiting a dentist regularly.

However he added: ‘Ensuring that there are adequate dentists available to treat all those who seek care is a further challenge, and this must also be addressed.’

The programme, which will jointly run by the Community Dental Service, Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust and Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust, will also introduce the new child-friendly logo of Dental Dragon that will be used as a brand for the entire programme, uniting both super pilots.

Both Community Dental Services in North and South Wales have taken on new staff to implement the preventative programme who will play an integral role in the success of the scheme.

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Reviewing infection control

The British Dental Association (BDA) Wales welcomed the initiative. Stuart Geddes, BDA Director for Wales, said: ‘There is clearly much work to be done to improve the oral health of Wales’ children and this fleet of mobile dental units is a good way of taking oral health education message to those who might not normally receive them.

The event is being held on Friday 27 February at the Cavendish Conference Centre in London.

The dental profession is currently undergoing a period of rapid change within infection control and is eagerly awaiting the new HTM 01-05, Decontamination in Dentistry.

This new document will consolidate previous guidance into one and incorporate practice standards that will be an opportunity for dental professionals to learn from industry experts on how these new developments will affect their practice and how to overcome challenges.

Kevin Lewis, dental director at Dental Protection Limited, will be speaking at the seminar on general guidelines for infection control in dentistry and the legal context and implications of ethical responsibilities.

Judith Doig, practice manager and Samantha Wright, head nurse at the Private Dental Centre, will be looking at the practical lessons learnt in infection control management and techniques for getting the whole practice involved and committed to infection control.

Caroline Pankhurst, senior specialist clinical teacher at King’s College London Dental Institute, will be discussing guidelines for effective use of barrier techniques: gloves, glasses, masks, surgery clothing and immunisation protocols and access for practice staff.

Carmel Maher and Sarah Green, regional consultants at shulke UK, will be speaking on the fundamentals of systematic hand washing and being aware of what gloves are available and the mist suitable for you and your team.

Daniel McAlonan, health and safety adviser at the British Dental Association’s (BDA) Professional Advisory Services, will be exploring the issue of the safe management of healthcare waste.

The last speaker, Paul Jenkins, operational manager for the Ser- ices Department at Swin- don and Marlborough NHS Trust, will talk about maintaining high standards of decontamination and complying with HTM 01-05.

The seminar meets the educational criteria set by the Gen- eral Dental Council for verifiable CPD (six hours) and is certified by the BDA.

For further information on the programme and to book your place on this seminar please contact: Merete Hatlestad, events executive at the BDA. Tel: 020 7565 4550, fax: 020 7565 4591, email: events@bda.org

The schools will develop joint research opportunities.
The Tories are spitting feathers once again this week after the government said access to NHS dentistry has improved. Ann Keen remains adamant that it is getting better in the dentistry world, and it probably is looking good in the three areas she refers to. But what about the other areas? Well if we base our opinion on the official figures released at the latter part of last year, it is hard to be optimistic. With 1.2 million fewer people seeing an NHS dentist in the two years up to 2008 compared to the last two years under the old contract, is it any wonder why the Tories think they can do better? Nevertheless, the Department is resilient to such bashings. Said the DH, ‘with more money, new NHS dental practices and more NHS dentists, progress is imminent.’

The move to introduce mobile dental units to sort out children’s teeth in Wales is to be applauded. The scheme means children will receive toothbrushes and toothpaste as well as oral care advice in a bid to stamp out tooth decay. With Welsh children having the worst rates of tooth decay in the UK, Designing a scheme that should make a real difference. Not only that, now that the scheme will extend through two super pilots in North and South Wales, improved oral health ‘in areas deemed to be of greatest oral health need,’ is literally just around the corner. No less than 500 schools will benefit from the scheme in the next three years. A big thanks goes to First Minister Rhodri Morgan please.

The British Dental Association is holding a seminar on how to prepare for retirement. This is an opportunity for dental professionals to get financial advice on retirement, as well as guidance on the more personal life-changing issues. The event on 15 February at Westminster Hotel in Glasgow is part of the British Dental Association’s (BDA) seminar series aimed at dental professionals considering retirement in the near future.

A spokesman for the BDA said: ‘Learn from, and interact with, our panel of experts offering you advice on how to manage the changes retirement brings, including financial planning, NHS pension scheme, disposing of the practice and much more.’

The seminar includes a talk by Roy Smitheman, financial adviser, from Lloyd & Whyte, on managing finances during retirement, inheritance tax, long-term care and equity release.

Mike Marigold, managing director of Montgomery Charles, will talk about SIPP investments. Wallace Laird, senior policy officer for BDA Scotland will talk about early retirement because of ill health and Joanna Coates of BDA Professional and Advisory Services will speak about how to sell your practice.

The seminar meets the educational criteria set by the GDC for verifiable CPD (5 1/2 hours) and is certified by the British Dental Association.

For further information on the programme and to book your place on this seminar please contact: Erica Sprigge, events officer at the British Dental Association. Tel: 020 7565 4590, fax: 020 7565 4591, email: events@bda.org
Guilty McGowan faces the charges

A dentist in Northern Ireland, who left a patient in pain after she botched up routine clinical procedures, has been found guilty of misconduct.

Clare McGowan, a dentist in Belfast, left the woman in pain after the crowns she had fitted kept falling out. The woman returned again and again to the surgery but was told that the pain would settle down.

McGowan was found guilty of a series of allegations.

McGowan was also accused of asking patients to pay in cash and stuffing wads of notes into her handbag.

The General Dental Council heard that when the Belfast dentist resigned she took the patient’s records with her.

Another patient made a complaint when McGowan bungled work on her fillings at the Cavity Corner Dental Surgery, Antrim Road, north Belfast.

She told the hearing: ‘It’s my personal opinion that the problems I have experienced with accesses and root canal surgery is as a result of the filling. I was not happy at all that the work has not been done to a proper standard.

I think somebody should be responsible for the work that has been done wrongly.’ She claimed that her teeth were sensitive after the treatment and one tooth needed root canal surgery. There were also allegations over dishonesty.

One patient said she wrote a cheque for £265 made out to McGowan instead of the surgery after McGowan said she needed the money to pay for a trip to a wedding in England.

The other patient claimed she spent more than £2,000 on the dental work but was not given any receipts. She claimed she gave £1,100 in notes to McGowan who put the money into her handbag after claiming the surgery would only accept cash for treatment.

McGowan was cleared of dishonesty but found guilty of a series of allegations. Tribunal chair Margaret Gray criticised the dentist’s lack of planning, poor communication and practice.

McGowan who also worked at Ballynahinch Dental Care, Main Street, County Down, was cleared of dishonesty and of not entering payments received into the practice’s accounts.

Despite the findings she could still be struck off if the committee decides her fitness to practice is impaired. The hearing has been adjourned until a date to be fixed later this month. 

Scottish Childsmile launch

Children at six schools in Inverness have had their teeth painted with a fluoride varnish as part of a new Scottish oral health improvement programme called Childsmile.

The programme is being rolled out in schools and nurseries across the full NHS Highland area by 2011.

Specially trained Childsmile nurses are visiting schools and nurseries and applying a fluoride varnish to the teeth of children whose parents have agreed to the procedure.

The youngsters involved are aged between two and six-years-old and the fluoride will leave their teeth orange for a couple of days, but the colour soon disappears.

Consent forms have been distributed to parents and they have been given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise concerns at a consent meeting.

Jennie Rawlinns, who is oral health improvement co-ordinator for the North Highland Community Health Partnership (CHP), said: ‘The Childsmile oral health support workers will arrange these sessions within the schools, attend consent meetings and provide further information, run the sessions on the day and ensure all the paperwork and administration is completed correctly.

Aftercare instructions are given to children to take home and for parents to pass to the child’s dentist to let them know this has been done.’

The CHP also employs oral health educators (OHE) who visit nurseries and school every term to oversee the toothbrushing programme and ensure staff training is up-to-date.

GDC hunts down members

The General Dental Council is looking for registrant members and lay members to join its new Council.

The General Dental Council (GDC) wants a wide variety of people to apply and is looking for candidates with experience of being involved in public life and sound judgement. People also need to be able to make sense of complex issues, think clearly and have the ability to be fair and see the bigger picture.

The new-look Council, will be made up of 12 registrant members and 12 lay members.

These are exciting times to become involved in healthcare regulation, and this is a great opportunity to play a leading role. Don’t let this opportunity pass you by. Log onto our website to find out more,’ said GDC president Hew Mathewson.

The new Council is a good opportunity for everyone, both dental professionals and members of the public, to get involved in how the UK dental profession is regulated.

I would strongly urge those registrants and members of the public with the relevant skills to apply to serve on the new Council since this is a unique opportunity to shape the future of dental regulation which is only open to every four years,’ he added.

The Department of Health has recently extended the current Council’s term of office for a period of up to six months. This extension is a result of a delay in the legislation necessary for the appointment of the new Council.

The Appointments Commission is overseeing the recruitment process for the new Council who will be appointed against the criteria for the role.

All Council members must share a common objective – to protect patients.

When choosing the candidates, consideration will be given to the particular areas of expertise required, the fact that the GDC regulates dental professionals from each of the four UK countries and equality and diversity.

The decision to implement a new-look, smaller, fully appointed Council follows the 2007 publication of the White Paper setting out the Government’s plans for healthcare regulation, including how the councils of healthcare regulatory bodies should be made up.

To apply for a place on the new Council, go to the Department of Health website at www.gdc-uk.org.