Scottish child dental health is improving

Results of the 2006 Scottish National Dental Inspection Programme have been published by Scottish Dental Epidemiological Co-ordinating Committee. The key child age groups are at entry into school in primary one (P1) and in primary seven (P7) before the move to secondary school. In the school year 2005/2006, the main focus was P1 children and the results from that work, give an indication of dental health in that child age group.

The proportion of P1 children with no obvious decay experience:

Across Scotland, 54% of P1 children were found to have no obvious decay experience—this is a further improvement on the 51% seen in the same age group in 2004 and 45% in 2003. The range across the fifteen NHS Boards was 47% to 68%.

Dental caries experience (DFiS) for Scotland:

The median number of decayed (d), missing (m) and filled (f) teeth (t) per child was 2.16, a continuing improvement over the figure of 2.56 and 2.76 found in the 2004 and 2005 surveys respectively. The DFiS range across the fifteen NHS Boards in 2006 was 1.53 to 2.68.

Trends over time:

There is an improving trend over time in the percentage of P1 children who showed no signs of having decay or restorative treatment of decay in any of their deciduous teeth. P1 children continue to make steady progress towards the 2010 national target of 60% having no obvious decay experience.

Depression:

The strong association between depression and dental disease seen in previous surveys is still apparent in 2006. P1 children in depression categories (DepCat) 1, 2 and 3 have already exceeded or nearly reached the national target, while children in the remaining groups are well below this. However, when compared to earlier surveys of this age group, children in DepCat groups 1, 2 and 3 show continued improvement over previous years, while those in DepCat 7 remain at the level of the 2004 NDIP survey.

Conclusions:

In the event of local and national oral health initiatives undertaken in recent years, these improving trends in both the increasing proportion of P1 children with no obvious decay experience and the decreasing average number of teeth affected by disease are very encouraging. It is hoped that these trends will be maintained in future years.

Responding to the findings, BDA Director for Scotland Andrew Lamb told Dental Tribune: “The increased percentage of children in Scotland with no obvious signs of tooth decay is welcome news. However, huge inequalities exist between children with the best and worst oral health and more must be done to help all four children grow up with smiles they can be proud of. The Scottish Executive must address the significant problems facing NHS dentistry in Scotland. The declining number of practitioners that provide NHS dentistry but are not deemed to be committed to the NHS is a serious concern and urgent attention is required to resolve this problem.”

More detailed information regarding the dental health of P1 children will be available in the full 2006 report of the National Dental Inspection Programme of Scotland to be published later in 2007.

Better dental care for US forces’ families

CDC and ADA warn of too much fluoridate for babies

New recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association suggest that parents who feed formula to their babies should consider using bottled water, rather than tap-water, when mixing it to prevent enamel fluorosis. While emphasizing the significant benefits of fluoridated tap water in preventing cavities they say that parents need to be aware of how much fluoride babies and young children ingest.

Currently about one-third of US children will develop very mild or mild fluorosis which in most cases is not considered a cosmetic problem. About four per cent will develop moderate and severe forms of the condition, usually from prolonged exposure to naturally high fluoride levels in some well water. CDC has for years cautioned parents to limit the amount of fluoridated toothpaste children use to no more than a pea-sized portion because ingesting the toothpaste during the first six years of their life has been linked to an increased risk of fluorosis.

“Fluorosis is a problem. It can affect enamel quality and who demands understanding and who demands payment upfront,” said a letter signed by Gen. David McKiernan, USAREUR Commander, to the assistant Defense secretary for health affairs.

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Go North-West young therapist

From Alaska comes new that the University of Washington in Anchorage will be training dental therapists to work in villages where cavity rates are high and dentists are rare. Dental therapists will be able to examine patients, take X-rays, administer local anaesthetics, extract teeth and fill routine cavities, under the long-distance supervision of a dentist.

The Alaska Dental Society and American Dental Association object to non-dentists working like this, however, and have a lawsuit pending in Anchorage Superior Court to try to stop people who aren’t dentists from ever filling or extracting teeth. The Alaska society supports training aides to prevent disease, president-elect Pete Higgins of Fairbanks said.

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A poll for Hospital Doctor magazine has shown that one in three NHS doctors has so little faith in the NHS they would rather be treated privately according to a new survey. Another six per cent said they would prefer to do so depending on the nature of their illness or if waiting lists were too long. The survey of 1,250 doctors in the NHS had taken out personal medical insurance to avoid being treated on the Health Service.

A spokeswoman for the Patients Association said: “It’s disheartening to see that many doctors don’t seem to have much faith in the NHS. Maybe they’re concerned about healthcare-acquired infections or the lack of resources at the moment. But what about those of us who don’t have a choice?”

Conservative health spokesman John Baron said: “This is a sign of low morale among doctors if a third of them want to go private. It’s a function of the fact the government is not allowing them to get on with the job and is meddling too much with all their targets.”

Liberal Democrat health spokesman Norman Lamb said: “Despite the record investment and all the changes, one quarter of NHS professionals are saying that they have no faith in the NHS Trust and the money they say don’t feel the need to make those decisions if they are lucky enough to have the money to do so.”

A third of GPs have private health insurance

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