Benevolent draw

The Christmas Draw for the British Dental Association Regional Funds raised £1,951,000. Applications to the Fund rose by 50 per cent in 2008, with £290,000 given to needy dentists and their families.

Sponsored silence

A dental nurse in Hereford held a sponsored silence to raise money for Breast Cancer Haven. Kate Beale, who works at Smith, Coleman and Holloman Dental Practice in Bromyard, kept a day of silence in support of a relative with cancer.

Tribute correction

Dental Tribune would like to apologise for printing Simon Hocken’s details incorrectly in the previous issue. Hocken can be contacted at The Breathe Business Group by emailing simon@nowbreathe.co.uk or calling 01548 855660. More information can be found at www.nowbreathe.co.uk

Dentistry statistics

Chief Dental Officer, Barry Cockcroft has welcomed the latest access dentistry statistics from the NHS Information Centre. The figures showed an increase of 400,000 (2.4 per cent) in the courses of treatment delivered by NHS dentists, in 2008/09 from the same period last year.

Professor Damien Walmsley of the British Dental Association (BDA) also welcomed the decision. He said: ‘We recognise that water fluoridation is a contentious issue for some people. The board was satisfied that, based on existing research, water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to improve dental health.’

The decision, which will affect around 200,000 people, follows a large public consultation and months of debate.

Jim Easton, the South Central Strategic Health Authority’s (SCSHA) chief executive, said: ‘We recognise that water fluoridation is a contentious issue for some people. The board was satisfied that, based on existing research, water fluoridation is a safe and effective way to improve dental health.’

Bob Deans, chief executive for Southampton City Primary Care Trust (PCT) said: ‘Southampton City PCT continues to believe that a water fluoridation scheme, when introduced with continued oral health promotion, will be the most effective way of reducing the large numbers of tooth fillings and extractions currently needed by children in Southampton.’

The British Dental Association (BDA) also welcomed the decision which it claims has been supported by dentists in the region.

The BDA’s scientific adviser, Professor Damien Walmsley said: ‘The BDA commends South Central’s decision as we believe that fluoridation is a safe and effective method of reducing dental decay and oral health inequalities. We look forward to the day when we see fewer children in Southampton having to endure the pain and discomfort of dental fillings.’

In Southampton, four in every 10 children have a filling by the time they start school.

The decision by South Central Strategic Health Authority to back fluoridation, is the first under 2005 laws, giving health authorities powers to demand the services from water companies.

The decision by the SHA will enable the PCT to go ahead and ask Southern Water to add the chemical to the water, probably by 2010.

A three-month consultation on the plans revealed that 72 per cent of 10,000 local people were opposed to the scheme.

John Spittswoode, chairman of Hampshire Against Fluoridation, called it ‘absolutely disgraceful’ and said: ‘They have refused to listen to all the evidence we have given them. They have ignored the will of the people – 72 per cent didn’t want it and yet they still are going to do it. It is deeply unethical.’

Anti-fluoridation campaigners claim it is ‘mass medication’ and that it is linked to health risks such as bone cancer and hip fractures. It also increases fluorosis (staining) of teeth.

Elizabeth McDonagh, chair of the National Pure Water Association, said: ‘This judicial action against the scheme in Southampton. She claims the health authorities blatantly promoted fluoridation during the three-month consultation and called the consultation a ‘sham and a waste of public money’.

SHAs are required to make decisions on the ‘cogency of the arguments for and against proposals. Authorities in north-west England, Derbyshire, Bristol, and Kirklees in West Yorkshire are thought to be among those preparing to go down the same route.

Fluoride is currently added to the water drunk by about 5.3m people in England, a ninth of the population, mainly in Birmingham and the West Midlands and parts of the north-east.

The government wants to target fluoridisation in areas affected by high levels of dental decay which is mainly deprived areas, where nutrition and oral health care is poorest.

The Scottish government already decided four years ago that it did not want local authorities to have the power to bring in fluoridation. The Isle of Man abandoned the idea last summer.

DT