Editorial comment

Water, water everywhere...

Fluoridation... a topic which is always destined to polarise public opinion. The ongoing saga which has developed over the decision to fluoridate the water in the Southampton area shows no signs of slowing as an open letter of opposition is released. The surprising thing is that more than a dozen dentists have signed the letter. As Neel Kothari said in the last issue (I hope you were all paying attention, there will be a test!), his main concern was not about the issue of fluoride in the water, but rather the way in which despite the overwhelming opposition of the local population to the plans, the SHA decided in favour of fluoridation. It may be interesting to find out the reasons these dental professionals chose to sign the letter.

If you have a particular opinion on the issue of fluoridation, please get in touch: Lisa@dentaltribuneuk.com.

This week sees the first of the big conference and events for the year: the Dentistry Show. Dental Tribune will be at the event, finding out what's hot and what's not for 2010 for all the gadget lovers out there. Please take a look at back of this issue to find out who is going to be there. If you see me, come and say hello and let me know what you think of DT; I would genuinely love to hear from you.

Do you have an opinion or something to say on any Dental Tribune UK article? Or would you like to write your own opinion for our guest comment page? If so don't hesitate to write to: The Editor, Dental Tribune UK Ltd, 4th Floor, Treasure House, 19-21 Hatton Garden, London, EC1 8BA

Or email: lisa@dentaltribuneuk.com

Editorial comment

More people are grinding their teeth due to job insecurities caused by the recession, according to dentists. Edinburgh dentist, Dr Yann Maidment, said he had seen the number of patients showing symptoms of tooth grinding rise by 10 to 20 per cent over the last 18 months.

He believes that people who work in banks or travel a lot for their jobs are among the worst affected due to having more stress in their lives.

Dentists are finding that more patients are needing treatment because a piece has fallen off their tooth due to bruxism, or a molar or incisor has cracked completely and is beyond repair. Others are suffering from headaches or pain in their mouth.

Dr Sharif Khan, a cosmetic and implant dentist, claims that ambitious people who work in competitive industries are more likely to suffer from bruxism.

“People who are worst affected by grinding are Type A personalities: ambitious people and perfectionists, who usually work in business,” said Dr Khan.

The British Dental Health Foundation revealed that its helpline has also seen a rise in calls about the problem.
Brace yourself for gene research

Children whose teeth develop later are more likely to need orthodontic treatment, according to new research. Several genes affect tooth development in the first year of a child's life.

The study, carried out by researchers from Imperial College London, the University of Bristol and the University of Oulu in Finland, found that the teeth of babies with particular genetic variants appear later and that these children have a lower number of teeth by the age of one.

The study scanned the entire genetic code of 6,000 individuals and the participants were tracked from the mother's early pregnancy right up until adulthood.

Scientists have discovered genetic variants that can detect the timing of the appearance of the first tooth in infants and also foretell the number of teeth the baby will have by age one.

Dr Marjo-Ritta Jarvelin and her contemporaries hope the research will help to carry out timely treatment and prevent in- nate dental problems.

One of the genes identified in the research is reportedly linked with a 1.55 greater risk of getting an expensive orthodontic treatment done during 50 years of age.

Dr Jarvelin said: “Our findings should provide a strong foundation for the study of the genetic architecture of tooth development, which as well as its relevance to medicine and dentistry may have implications in evolutionary biology since teeth represent important markers of evolution.

“We hope also that these discoveries will increase knowl- edge about why fetal growth seems to be such an important factor in the development of many chronic diseases.”

The study results also established an association between the time the first tooth takes to appear and the dental problems that will be caused to the infant in later life due to it.

The study found that babies with fewer milk teeth by age one are at a greater risk of undergoing dental treatments later on in life than those who develop more teeth by the same age, and this depends entirely on their genes.

The researchers found that some of the genes associated with development of teeth in toddlers were also linked with development of the skull, jaws, ears, fingers, toes, and heart by previous studies.

This led the study authors to conclude that NHS adult and many other organs have familiar development passageway during infancy.

“The discoveries of genetic and environmental determinants of human development will help us to understand the development of many disorders which appear later in life,” said Dr Jarvelin.

The study and its findings have been published in the Feb. 26 issue of Public Library of Sci- ence or PLoS.

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NHS Newham launches dental campaign

Everyone in the UK should be able to access free, ba- sic dental care, according to the Green Party’s new dental health policy.

In the policy, the party claims that only half the UK popula- tion is provided with free dental healthcare and calls NHS dentistry a ‘regressive tax’.

A spokesperson for the party said: “Green think’s it’s unfair that many poorer people including children are going with- out proper dental healthcare, while NHS money is wasted on botched privatisation schemes. Green MPs will fight for a dental health service for the UK that’s fair, free and effective.

As for fluoridating the water to improve dental health, the Greens said this is not a viable solution and called it more like a ‘sticking plaster with side effects’.

“It’s unfair that less affluent populations are having mass medication foisted upon them as a cheap ‘sticking plaster solution’ instead of being provided with a proper dental health strategy, while health services are treat- ed like profit-driven businesses rather than public services,” said a spokesman.

They claim that mass medication of doubtful efficacy and potential side-effects is no substitute for a proper dental healthcare strategy. We need to be teaching new parents how to look after their toddlers’ teeth, and teaching young children from nursery onwards all about how to look after their own teeth properly. And in addition, we need everyone to have access to the right professional support, which means guaranteeing free access to an NHS dentist for eve- ryone who wants it.”

The Green Party also states that getting access to an NHS dentist is difficult and there is wide variation across the coun- try with between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of NHS practices not taking any new NHS patients.

The campaign tells people about the availability of local NHS dentists, the range of treat- ments available and explains the NHS charging system.

Dr Malhotra has been work- ing as a dentist for 27 years and claims to have seen ‘great im- provements in dentistry’.

He said: “My surgery at The Lift in Manor Park has the lat- est equipment and dedicated staff. In fact, the surgery looks so good I’ve added a window sign to tell people we’re not a pri- vate practice.”

He added: “Working in New- ham is great. When I came to the UK, I lived across the road from where my surgery is now, so I love the area. It’s ethnically diverse, the people are fantastic and there’s always something going on. Being a dentist is re- ally rewarding; building rela- tionships with patients, relieving pain and helping improve peo- ple’s oral health.”

Dr Malhotra’s surgery is sur- rounded by schools so he sees a lot of children and parents and says that children ‘should visit the dentist as soon as they get their first teeth, so they get used us’ so they can see ‘we’re not scary’.

Robert Moore, director of Pri- mary and Community Services Commissioning, NHS Newham and said: “There are a number of misconceptions people have about NHS dental services in Newham. These include that it is hard to get an appointment, we don’t offer quality treatments, and that treatment is expensive.

In fact there are many NHS den- tists that you can go to in New- ham. Costs for their services are set by the NHS and for many NHS dental services are free.”

He added: “We are investing in NHS dentistry. So it’s never been easier to see an NHS den- tist locally.”

The campaign details NHS charges and explain how visit- ing the dentist should be part of everyone’s health routine push- ing the message that it is pre- vention, not just cure.

There are new dental adverts and posters as well as informa- tion leaflets in dentist and GP surgeries, libraries and chil- dren’s centres in Newham as part of the campaign.

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Green Party: basic dental care for all

It is also concerned that less than half of the UK adult population and only around two thirds of children are visiting NHS dentists.

The campaign is being suppo- rted by Dr Grish Malhotra, who has an NHS surgery in Newham.

He said: “Nationally, there’s a perception that people can’t find an NHS dentist. Locally, with significant investment there’s now more than you may think. Last year, New- ham’s 50 NHS dentists saw 98,194 patients.”

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34 is the magic number!

It’s been a fantastic start to 2010 for leading custom-branded dental plan provider Practice Plan. Not only have they recently achieved a 5-star status from Best Companies, making them an “extraordinary company to work for”, but they have now been ranked position 34 in the prestigious Sunday Times Top 100 Best Companies to Work For!

Two hundred and eighty enterprises were ranked, from entries of 964 companies and in total they surveyed more than 250,000 employee opinions, as well as evaluating each organisation’s key statistics, processes and policies. Practice Plan made a significant impression by gaining an enviable top 50 position, particularly being a brand new entry, and sailing straight into position 34 to beat off stiff competition.

Managing director Nick Dilworth explained: “Ranking 34th place in our first entry into Top 100 is fantastic. It gives recognition for the way in which we have all pulled together as a team in what has otherwise been a challenging year. I am privileged to be part of such a formidable team who are not only fun to be around, but whose continued enthusiasm and commitment is beyond question.”

The company gained amazing results from the employee questionnaires, which evaluated the staff’s opinions on factors such as leadership, their manager, pay and benefits, wellbeing, the firm’s willingness to give something back, people’s personal development and overall sense of affiliation with their employers.

This year’s annual awards ceremony, held at the Battersea Evolution, was a particularly special event as Best Companies themselves were celebrating their tenth anniversary, and so the glamorous black tie evening was bigger and better than ever. In usual Practice Plan style though, it wasn’t the list of directors who attended the celebrations, Managing Director Nick Dilworth invited nine guests, picked at random from all areas of the business to attend the ceremony with him.

Dan Griffiths senior graphic designer who was at the awards said: “I love working at Practice Plan. My colleagues are all fun to work with and know what they’re doing. Also, we benefit from flexitime, a weekly fresh fruit basket, loads of tea and coffee, as well as bosses that respect us and make us feel worthwhile.”

One in five say they would benefit from braces

The survey, commissioned by British Lingual Orthodontic Society (BLOS), found six per cent – equating to 5.1m of the population – would consider giving orthodontic treatment to a friend as a present, while 15-17 year olds were shown as the most favourable to treatment, with one in four saying they would definitely benefit from teeth straightening.

The survey revealed that people living in the South East are more likely to believe they need braces. Of those living in the South East of England, 50 per cent felt their teeth would benefit from orthodontics compared to seven per cent of those living in the South West.

Gender does not make much of a difference, with 18 per cent of men responding positively compared to 19 per cent of women.

The age group least interested in orthodontic treatment appeared to be the 45-54s, with only five per cent believing they would benefit from treatment, while the over-70s were next with six per cent.

The survey also flagged up poor awareness of less visible lingual braces, with 72 per cent of people unaware of the treatment.

Bob Slater, chairman of BLOS, welcomed the positive attitude to orthodontic braces among the British and said: “The fact that so many young people today have conventional braces, thanks to the National Health Service, might explain the lack of awareness of invisible lingual braces.

“Another factor is that in the past, the UK has been influenced by American trends. Lingual braces are not so widely adopted in the USA where people tend to be happy to talk about the work they are having done. In countries like Italy and France, lingual braces are more popular, since Europeans appreciate the discretion of invisible braces.”

He added: “Already we are finding that a fair proportion of teenagers would rather, where possible, pay privately to have lingual braces because it makes them feel less self-conscious, joining forces with those in their 50s and 40s who, for professional reasons, prefer not to have visible braces.”

Digital impression-taking technology market set to grow

The digital impression-taking technology market will see rapid growth as dentists adopt this quick and accurate solution to manufacturing and fitting dental restorations, according to a recent report.

The US market for digital impression-taking systems is estimated to reach $83.5 million by 2015, and the UK is set to follow suit, according to an online report by DentalProductReport.com.

Dr James Hooper from The Dental Practice, Hove, who uses the Lava chairside oral scanner COS from 3M ESPE said: “I’m not surprised by this news as I recognised this was a big move forward as soon as it came out.

“I’m amazed by the accuracy and storage of the information and being able to store it for so long – something a plaster model just can’t do.”

He believes that ‘every dental practice and laboratory will be looking to use digital impressioning in the near future’.

The primary advantages of using a digital impression system over traditional processes is the elimination of many manual steps involved in creating a restoration.

The technology produces a very accurate restoration because the three-dimensional image is produced instantly, allowing the dentist to make any adjustments necessary to the prep site in real time.

Taking impressions can also be an unpleasant experience for the patients as it can induce a ‘gag reflex, making the procedure distressing for both patient and dentist.

A spokeswoman for 3M ESPE which produces Lava COS said: “Digital technology has truly found its place in the dental industry.”