Kid’s hospital dental treatment ‘worrying’

Researchers have called the rise in the number of children having dental treatment in hospital ‘worrying’.

Nearly 50,000 children a year attend hospital to have teeth pulled out or be treated for decay, an analysis of hospital data has shown.

Researchers who analysed hospital data in Plymouth’s Peninsula Dental School called it ‘worrying’ that the number of under-17s hospitalised for dental treatment had been rising since 1997.

The findings, which were published in the British Dental Journal, revealed that children from poor areas were twice as likely to need treatment as those from more affluent families.

The figures showed there were 517,885 individual courses of dental treatment in NHS hospitals for children up to the age of 17 between 1997 and 2006.

The total number of children needing treatment was 470,113 and 80 per cent of admissions involved tooth extraction - in two-thirds of cases because of tooth decay.

The peak age for children needing teeth taken out was five.

Professor David Moleys, who led the study, said yearly rises in hospital admissions had come despite rates of tooth decay and infection remaining steady.

The reasons for this would have to be identified in order to cut the number of admissions, improve dental care for children and ultimately reduce the financial burden to the NHS, he said.

Joke apology

The BBC has apologised for a joke made by one of its presenters about jockey Liam Treadwell’s teeth, shortly after he had ridden a 100-1 outsider to victory in the Grand National. The broadcaster said it had received 1,477 complaints from viewers upset after presenter Clare Balding joked about the state of Mr Treadwell’s teeth in a TV interview after the race. ‘Give us a big grin to the camera,’ said Balding. Then she added: ‘No let’s see your teeth. He hasn’t got the best in the world but you can afford to go and get them done now.’ The BBC said in a statement ‘Clare Balding had no intention of embarrassing Liam Treadwell, but she fully accepts that she should not have raised the subject with him at that time.’

Lost dentures

A man in Southampton is appealing for the return of his £500 denture plate after he left it on a wall. Denis Grumwood left the shoulder bag containing the denture plate when he was cycling back to his home in Portswood. He stopped briefly for a rest and left his bag on the wall in Southampton General Hospital. He returned to the wall 15 minutes later when he realised he had left the bag behind but it had gone.

Whale tooth

A whale tooth found by Charles Darwin during his famous expedition to the Galapagos Islands will be put up for sale this August. Darwin’s 1853 voyage on the HMS Beagle laid the foundation for his subsequent work on evolution. The whale’s tooth is inscribed with a picture of the Beagle sailing through rough seas against a mountainous backdrop.

The memento was decorated by James Bute, a Royal Navy marine private who served aboard the ship, according to the auction house, Bonhams. It said the memento is expected to fetch up to 50,000 pounds when it is offered for sale during the auctioneer’s travel and exploration-themed sale in London on 16 September.

The study found that children from poorer backgrounds were particularly at risk, being twice as likely to need treatment as those from more affluent areas.

Dr Paul Ashley, head of paediatric dentistry at University College London’s Eastman Dental Institute, the second author of the study, said: ‘Two aspects of the study are particularly worrying - the rise in the number of general anaesthetics being given to children, and the widening gulf in dental health between social classes.’

He said general anaesthetics could be fatal to children.

The researchers wrote: ‘Caries (tooth decay) is a preventable disease yet the number of children being admitted for elective extractions of teeth due to caries was increasing yearly. Further investigation to determine some of the underlying reasons for this trend is required.’

Peter Bateman, chair of the British Dental Association’s (BDA) Salaried Dentists Committee, called on water fluoridation to be used to address the gulf that has developed between the social classes.

He said: ‘This research highlights the stark inequalities in the oral health of England’s children. Those from socially deprived backgrounds are far more likely to have undergone extractions under general anaesthetic than their peers from more affluent backgrounds. The reasons for the apparent trends in this period are not clear and require, as the authors of the study acknowledge, further investigation.’

He added: ‘What is clear though is that dental caries is a preventable disease and it is a tragedy that social class remains such an accurate predictor of oral health.’

Water fluoridation, as the long-standing scheme in the West Midlands illustrates, has great potential to address this divide. The BDA was pleased to see the successful outcome of the consultation on the introduction of such a scheme in Southampton earlier this year and would like to see local people in other areas of the country given the same choice.’

The Department of Health claimed the findings have been affected by changes brought in since 2001 which means that anaesthesia is now given in hospitals - rather than dental surgeries - for safety reasons.

A spokesman claimed that ‘there has been no increase in tooth decay in the period covered, which pre-dates the new dental contract.’

He added: ‘Preventative oral healthcare has actually improved substantially thanks to the new dental contract.’

Clinical

Maximun strength

If you have had adhesive failures, you probably don’t believe the success rates of the leading cosmetic dentists for their indirect adhesive restorations.

Patient psychology

There are many dental patients who are so self-conscious about their teeth and smile that they let their mouths dictate their level of confidence and happiness.

In brief

The World’s Dental Newspaper · United Kingdom Edition

Full advice

The Department of Health has now published its full advice to dentists and practice staff on local decontamination. HTM 01-03 Decontamination in primary care dental practices updates and expands on the version published last October.

Lease holes

Are you a dentist looking to purchase either a practice or an existing lease, or set up a squat? Lean how to secure the best deal for you.

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