Pedal power
A team of dental professionals combine cycling, rugby and adventure to raise much-needed funds for children’s charity Wooden Spoon

Last year, Ian Mills, a partner at Torrington Principal Clinic and Academic Clinical Fellow at Peninsula Dental School, along with Simon Hill, the owner of Wyndham House Dental Practice in Lutwitt Major, Cardiff, organised a dental implant conference in Cardiff to coincide with the Wales vs. England match at the Millennium Stadium.

It was the second year a conference had been organised with all profits donated to the Wooden Spoon Charity, which helps disadvantaged children. This year however, they decided to have a break from conference organising and do something completely different.

A new plan
Ian came up with an idea that we could go and watch Scotland play England at Murrayfield and then cycle from Edinburgh to Cardiff in time to watch Wales play Italy,” explained Simon. As an ex-international rugby player, he was fairly undaunted by the thought of such an adventure, but was mightily impressed with Ian’s enthusiasm for such an idea. “I was amazed that Ian had suggested this, as the last bike he’d been on was a Chopper,” said Simon rather ungraciously.

By the time Ian realised what he had let himself in for, it was too late to back out. He obviously wasn’t prepared to suffer alone, so quickly recruited Martin Docking a dental technician from Cornwall, Adrian Watts a consultant in Restorative Dentistry in Cardiff and a couple of other unsuspecting friends. So on the 14 March 2010, a group of nine cyclists, three support vehicles and an orthopaedic surgeon, set off from Murrayfield to pedal the 450 miles to Cardiff.

An idyllic adventure
The trip took them over snow-covered mountains in the Borders, up hills and dales in the Lake District and through the beautiful Brecon Beacons.

‘The first few days were fairly hard, but day four was certainly the most difficult. We cycled 94 miles from Warrington to Church Stretton in Shropshire which included an unplanned detour with some hideous hills,’ explained Adrian.

As if that wasn’t challenging enough, Adrian cycled the whole way on a single-speed bike, earning him the coveted yellow jersey, which was presented at the end of the tour. “I’m still not sure whether the award was for recognition of my courage or my stupidity,” said Dr Watts, “but I have a suspicion it may have been the latter.”

The group covered the distance in six days and arrived at the Millennium Stadium in time for kick off. “To arrive in Cardiff on match day and be greeted by family, friends and rugby fans was fantastic. To then cycle into the Millennium Stadium before the game was incredible, and really quite emotional,” said Martin.

The group managed to raise over £10,000 for Wooden Spoon, which will be spent on local groups in Wales and Devon. ‘It was a marvellous experience, although I’ve had to do all my dentistry standing up since I got back,’ quipped Ian who is based in Devon.

With hindsight, organising a conference might not seem such a bad idea, but for the rest of the group, the experience was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that they will never forget. ‘When we arrived in Cardiff, we were greeted by family, friends and rugby fans,’ said Simon. ‘It was amazing and kept me going with the crowds. The last six miles or so were my hardest but the crowds were cheering the occasional cranky penny chew!”

Keep on running
Two willing dentists take part in London’s 50th Marathon to raise money for Tanzanian charity, Bridge2Aid

Two dentists managed to raise over their target sponsorship amount when they ran the Flora London Marathon in aid of dental charity, Bridge2Aid.

Dr Katherine Opie-Smith and Dr Chris Waith completed the 50th London Marathon on Sunday 25 April with over £5,000 other runners and together, raised over £2,000. Both have previously worked in Tanzania as part of Bridge2Aid’s Dental Volunteer Programme (DVP).

“It was definitely a good day,” said Katherine, who is also a Bridge2Aid Trustee and works at the Dulwich Village Dental Practice in London. “My time was 4:55:55. I was 64 seconds slower than when I did it in 2008 but as I was only 1 year older I think I can easily recover though – lots of blisters!”

Pre-race nerves
“At first I thought I was going to have to run it a tad under-prepared,” reported Chris who works at Cahill Dental Care Practice in Bolton, Greater Manchester. “I had shin splints and a sprained ankle in the lead up to the Marathon and was just praying that sheer willpower will get me through!”

The last six miles or so were my hardest but the crowds were amazing and kept me going with constant encouragement and cheering or the occasional crampy penny chew!”

‘All in all, it left me extremely tired and emotional but the thought of my gorgeous family Michelle and baby Dylan, who have supported me throughout, as well as those amazing people I met in Tanzania last year kept me going until the end!’

Chris completed the Marathon in 4:15:34 and is continuing his support of Bridge2Aid by entering the BUPA Great Manchester Run on 16 May and the BUPA Great North Run on 19 September.

The funds that Katherine and Chris have raised will go directly towards Bridge2Aid’s work of helping Tanzanians who live in rural, remote locations to have access to safe, emergency dentistry.

Stop press!
Bridge2Aid would like to ask for some support for our BUPA London 10k runners who are taking part in the challenge on 51 May. To find out more, please visit www.bridge2aid.org or email fundraising@bridge2aid.org.

About the charity
Bridge2Aid (B2A) is a dental and community development charity working in the Mwanza region of North West Tanzania. We started full scale operations in 2004 and work closely with the Tanzanian Government to deliver aspects of their dental strategy. We operate a full-time dental camp in the city of Mwanza (Hope Dental Centre), and have a community development programme for the disabled community based at Bukumbi Care Centre.

Our focus is sustainability – empowering local people to improve their own lives over the long-term. We have Trustees and administration in the United Kingdom and we are a UK registered charity no. 1092481. Bridge2Aid is a registered Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Tanzania with additional Tanzania-based Advisors.

The four key aspects of Bridge2Aid’s vision are:

• To provide primary dental care and oral health education to communities in Tanzania
• To equip and further train local health personnel to provide emergency dentistry to rural communities
• To care for and empower the poor and marginalised in Tanzanian society
• To provide opportunities for UK dental professionals and others to use their skills to serve Tanzania, as locums or participants on the Dental Volunteer Programme (DVP).

Further information, contact Lucy Jenkins by emailing lucy@bridge2aid.org or Mark Topley by emailing mark@bridge2aid.org.
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DISCUS DENTAL
Dentaid is in the process of gathering together any unwanted dental instruments (both for conservation and for surgery) to make up kits that will equip health workers to provide dental care in remote rural communities worldwide.

Following extensive feedback on this project, Dentaid has produced a Full Instrument Kit available for purchase or short-term hire, to trained dental professionals working in areas without access to clinic facilities or electricity to use to offer treatment.

Although principally an extensive extraction kit, it also includes instruments and materials for carrying out oral surgery. Many dental personnel have taken these kits on many a short-term visit to countries as diverse as Peru, Kenya, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Bosnia. Intended for use in remote rural areas, the kits are fully portable and supplied in a rucksack or a plastic toolbox.

To support hiring of the kits, the Dentaid workshop staff have created a new module system whereby each user can tailor an instrument kit to their specific needs. It consists of 11 modules, including those for examinations, ART, extractions, and oral health education, can be bought or hired individually or in any combination. Further details of these kits may be found at www.dentaid.org, by clicking on the ‘What We do’ button, then the ‘Physical Resources’ button.

New Cambodia project

About 1,200 families actually live in or around a toxic landfill site in Phnom Penh, driven by desperation to survive by selling scraps of plastic and metal scavenged from this, the largest dumpsite in Southeast Asia.

The Cambodian Children’s Fund (CCF) serves this needy community with four residential care centres and a school providing education for 450 children, and has just opened a medical centre with two full-time doctors offering free treatment. Now they have recruited a dentist who is ready to supervise a dental surgery with the help of volunteer surgeons and therapists – but only once equipment is found for it.

This is where Dentaid comes in! A fully refurbished surgery, (designed to meet the detailed local requirements outlined in Dentaid’s end-user questionnaire which every project applicant has to complete) can be crated and shipped to Cambodia for £3,750 – but first the funding has to be found. If you are interested in helping this project, please call 01794 324249 or email info@dentaid.org.

Support for Dentaid

From providing instruments to make up vitally needed dental kits, to raising funds for a project in Cambodia, there are so many ways you can help Dentaid make a difference.