National Smile Month 2009 is declared open

The profession turned out in style last week to support the British Dental Health Foundation’s 54th National Smile Month campaign despite the Sri Lankan protest in Parliament Square.

Held at the House of Commons, Look After Yourself, Brush for Health was declared open by Deputy Chief Dental Officer Sue Gregory. After thanking sponsors P&G, Oral B, Wrigley’s Orbit Complete and Tesco Dental Insurance, the Foundation’s chief executive Dr Nigel Carter said: ‘The foundation only acts as a facilitator to help make the campaign as it is, but it would never be as successful without the help from the rest of the profession.’

Following the welcoming speech from President Chris Potts, special guests took to the lectern to speak on the importance of the UK’s largest oral health awareness campaign.

Television star Dr Uchenna Okoye represented campaign supporters Oral B and was joined by Adrian Tosomey, oral care brand manager for fellow campaign supporter Wrigley’s Orbit Complete. Tesco Dental Insurance was the third of a trio of Platinum Supporters for the campaign.

Said Dr Uchenna Okoye: ‘My idea was to talk about the F-word – floss – but my expectations were exceeded when I thought am I doing what I say?! Our job isn’t to beat our patients over the head with information but to counteract the effects of inadequate oral health. Everyone plays a part to get the message out there and I believe this will be the best campaign yet so well done.’

Following the celebrations Dr Nigel Carter said: ‘The National Smile Month launch proved a fantastic event as once more the great and the good of UK dentistry came to toast this year’s campaign. We are sure the campaign theme Look After Yourself, Brush for Health will get the nation talking about the importance of good oral health and we anticipate yet another successful campaign.

‘This event will hopefully prove to be the perfect platform for events across the country and we look forward to the activities organised by all our supporters.’

National Smile Month runs from May 17th until June 16th 2009, with a second National Smile Month USA running the length of June in conjunction with Oral Health America.

Scores of events across the UK will help drive the British campaign. Practices, schools, businesses, hospitals and Primary Care Trusts can find information, downloadable press release templates, sponsorship forms and a chance to register their activity at the website www.nationalsmile-month.org.

For a chance to win an oral health supply pack for the primary school of your choice upload your National Smile Month photos online to take part in the campaign photo competition.

For more information contact the Foundation on 0870 770 4614 or email pr@dental-health.org.
A potential development in mouth cancer treatment has been welcomed by the British Dental Health Foundation.

The British Dental Health Foundation has welcomed results of studies at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University in New York. The study 'The histone deacetylase inhibitor LBH589 inhibits expression of mitotic genes causing G2/M arrest and cell death in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma cell lines' showed that an anti-cancer compound killed off mouth cancer cells removed from head and neck cancer patients.

Nearly 5,000 people are diagnosed with mouth cancer in the UK each year and currently just half of those diagnosed survive beyond five years. The new studies – found when scientists tested a drug for its effects on blood cancer and reported in the online edition of the Journal of Pathology – will it is hoped, mark a significant breakthrough.

The experimental drug involved new chemotherapy agents known as histone deacetylase (HDAC) inhibitors - which limit cell growth.

Lead researcher, Einstein clinician Richard Smith, M.D. said: 'This report shows that an HDAC inhibitor is effective on head and neck cancer cell lines, and that is the first step toward use in humans.'

The Foundation’s chief executive Dr Nigel Carter said: ‘Such news, though very early days, is to be welcomed as the low long-term survival rate from mouth cancer makes the disease one of the deadliest.

Currently the best chance of beating the cancer comes from early detection, improving survival rates to more than 90 per cent, so it is important to follow the slogan of the Mouth Cancer Action Month campaign: ‘If in doubt, get checked out.’

He added: ‘Though this research could prove important, it is vital that dentists and health professionals continue to perform oral screenings and educate on how to look out for signs of oral cancer. Maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle also helps to prevent problems developing.’

The most common causes of oral cancer are smoking and drinking alcohol to excess, linked to 80 per cent of cases. Research has recently suggested that the human papillomavirus (HPV) transmitted via oral sex, could soon become one of the most common causes of the disease.

Quitting smoking, cutting down on alcohol and eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables lowers the risk of mouth cancer. Mouth Cancer Action Month 2009 takes place in November. For more information go online at www.mouthcancer.org or call the National Dental Helpline on 0845 065 1188.
A couple in the Midlands have set up the first dental practice in the UK that is solely for children. The children go into a brightly coloured room and they are then introduced to the hygienist and then the dentist.

‘By the time they eventually sit in the dentist’s chair they feel safe and realise that, actually, it’s no big deal,’ said Sara Reece who established Smilescool with partner Mike Reece.

Smilescool is aimed at pupils aged up to 11. The children learn how to brush and floss, and they can also carry out scientific experiments such as looking at their teeth under a microscope.

They get a two-minute egg timer for teeth brushing, a pen torch to see inside their mouth, and fun wall charts and stickers to record their progress on a daily basis.

Each week, they chew a disclosing tablet which shows dental plaque – then record the results.

‘The beauty of this approach is that parents can see in an instant if their child is brushing effectively and making progress,’ says Dr Reece. He points to the Government ‘Future Study’ 2005, which found that if children take care of their teeth and mouths in the early years, there is an 80 per cent chance that at 15 years old they will stay free from decay.

Dr Reece describes Smilescool as ‘a comprehensive preventive care model that is not about fixing problems as they arise, it is about prevention’.

Chief executive of The British Dental Health Association, Dr Nigel Carter, called it a ‘highly innovative project that we are confident will help towards positive progress in children’s oral health’.

While Professor Chapple, professor of periodontology at the Peridontal Research Group at the Birmingham School of Dentistry described it as ‘the best innovation in dentistry that I have seen in many years’.

He added: ‘It is time we started implementing preventative care models properly, rather than paying lip service to prevention. This means we have to start with infants and influence their values and lifestyles to prevent common oral diseases. Given the strong associations established between periodontitis and cardiovascular disease, adverse diabetes outcomes and stroke, and the recognition that obesity, poor diets and sedentary lifestyles impact upon periodontal health and general health, we also have a key role to play in motivating youngsters to better lifestyles.

The successful implementa- tion of M.I.K.E.S. System (a key component within the smile programme) will have a hugely beneficial effect in educating, motivating and empowering patients to achieve better oral health and therefore better general health.’

Smilescool charges a monthly fee based on the age of the child, which ranges from £3.42 to £14.48.

The fees includes the ‘check-up’ provision by the dentist, any treatment the child might need, the services of the hygienist/therapist for preventative treatments such as fissure sealants and the educational, prevention focused oral health care ‘POD’ sessions with the dental health educator and smilescool team.

The child will also have access to one of Smilescool dentists for ‘out-of-hours’ advice and treatment in the event of a dental emergency. The child will also be eligible for UK & Worldwide insurance in the event of a dental injury or accident away from home.

Children-only dental practice

Raising the profile

The director for Scotland has been working hard to raise the profile of the General Dental Council since he took on the new role this year.

The newly created role is the General Dental Council’s (GDC) next step in targeting its resources more carefully to meet the needs of the four nations of the United Kingdom.

Mr Jackson has a background in business development and consultancy and voluntary experience in education, and was previously partnership director at BT Scotland.

He said: ‘It’s a great opportunity for the GDC’s voice to be heard in Scotland – and for us to listen to others. I’m working closely with the Scottish Parliament, members of the public and the dental profession so they realise the GDC isn’t a London-centric regulator.

We are keen to find ways of making the GDC more relevant to people in Scotland. The GDC promises to protect patients and regulate the dental team – that’s the principal aim in all my work.’

Making connections with patient groups is a priority. He has also attended Scottish cross professional and regulatory groups, had informal discussions with the public health ministers and MSPs, and spoken at the Scottish Dental Defence Union’s (DDU) Education Conference.

Speaking about his new role, Ian Jackson said: ‘Scotland is different in that it has its own system of government and professionals tend to interact differently. One of the challenges ahead is to work effectively within this framework.

My aim is for people in Scotland to better understand what the GDC does whether it’s giving dentists and dental care professionals guidance, checking educational standards or investigating complaints. And I’m here, ready to listen to find out more about how we can help develop the GDC’s role.’

Calling top dental teachers

The Dental Defence Union, has begun its annual search for Britain’s top dental teachers.

Students and vocational dental practitioners have until 31 August to nominate their teachers or trainers for the Dental Defence Union’s (DDU) Educational Awards, now in its seventh year.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the DDU, said: ‘The DDU believes that dental educators make an enormous contribution to the future strength of the dental profession by demonstrating good practice, instilling professionalism and most of all, inspiring the next generation of dental professionals.

We are always extremely impressed by the high standards of teaching we learn about during the Educational Awards and last year’s winners – Professor Dayananda Samarawickrama, Alison Grant and Stephen Brookes – were a great example of how great teaching has made a difference to many students and trainers.

Dean Hallows, marketing director of Dentsply, which is sponsoring the awards said: ‘Dentsply is delighted to once again sponsor the DDU Educational Awards. Supporting our next generation is of paramount importance and dental teachers play a pivotal role in advancing the profession; these awards are just one way of promoting their success and highlighting excellence in this area.

There are three award categories: Dentist Teacher of the Year, Vocational Teacher of the Year and Dental Care Professional (DCP) Teacher of the Year.

The winners will be chosen on 18 November at an awards ceremony in central London.

Finalists will be awarded £250 each and the overall winners in each category will receive £1,000 towards the cost of educational materials for their schools or VT schemes.

Awards will be judged across a number of criteria, including knowledge of the subject and the ability to motivate others.

Students and vocational dental practitioners in the UK and Ireland can download or complete a nomination form online at the DDU website, www.the-ddu.com/duawards, or obtain one from their DDU dental liaison manager.