Dentist charged with £1m fraud

A dentist has been suspended after she was charged with stealing £1m from the NHS.

Dr Joyce Trail, who has run a dental practice in Handsworth for the last 12 years, has been accused of submitting up to 5,000 bogus patient invoices between 2006 and 2009 and has been suspended from her practice in the West Midlands.

She is charged with one count of obtaining a false money transfer by deception and three counts of fraud. Dr Trail has denied any wrongdoing.

In 2008, she opened the city’s first medical spa next door to her practice, offering everything from Botox to ‘smile makeovers’.

She was suspended following a lengthy investigation by the NHS Counter Fraud Team and West Midlands Police, which led to her arrest.

Events staged for NSM

Dental surgeries, schools and even zoos have been taking part in this year’s National Smile Month.

The campaign, which is run by the British Dental Health Foundation, has the slogan ‘TeethLife’, highlighting the importance of looking after teeth and maintaining them for life.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the Foundation, said: “A good oral healthcare routine can help guard against all sorts of oral and general health conditions from bad breath and decay to gum disease, which has been linked to a number of more serious health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and strokes.

“By promoting good oral healthcare in a fun and imaginative way we hope to persuade more people of the importance of taking care of their teeth.”

Even zoos have been taking part. Animals at Dudley Zoo receiving check ups as part of National Smile Month included reindeer, tapir, babirusa, alpaca and chumps, lemurs, orangutans and crocodiles.

In Leicester, Smile Essential put on a series of events including special treats for children with free giveaways and ballons while all adults were invited to enter its fundraising prize draw to win a home teeth whitening package worth £399 for £1.

Patients were also given the opportunity to sample some of the latest oral health products completely free of charge. Outside of the practice, the team hosted events at local schools to help promote the importance of healthy teeth and healthy eating.

Practice principal, Lina Ko-techa said: “We were delighted to get involved in National Smile Month and to give a little bit back to the residents of Leicester. Good oral health is very important and we are always looking for ways to help improve the dental health of our patients.”

In Devon, hygienist Corinne McElligott from the Spicer Road Dental Practice, has been visiting schools with her cuddly puppet, Roo the Kangaroo. She uses Roo to teach children how to look after their teeth.

Ms McElligott organised brushathons at two schools and had 500 children brushing their teeth for two minutes.

She said: “It’s all about getting young children to participate and introduce them to dentistry in a friendly way. The brushathons were a great chance for the children to have fun with brushing while learning some important lessons. Hopefully it will get them talking about their teeth!”

Another original event took place in Manchester, where Titon Training Dental School created a competition on Facebook to find the best smile.

Similarly, a London clinic has been running a competition with a prize of a makeover for the winner’s teeth. Contestants had to send in a picture of their smile to make the judges laugh.

Oldham Dental Care in Hook in Hampshire offered a ‘New for Old’ trade in on your toothbrush.

Patients were asked to take along their old toothbrush to the surgery and pick up a brand new Oral-B CrossAction toothbrush or receive 25 per cent off a new Oral-B Professional Care 550 electric toothbrush. Alongside this they also held a ‘Name the Celebrity Smile Competition’, The surgery is offering a brand new Oral-B toothbrush to the winner.

Meanwhile over in Redditch, YMCA and Sure Start Children’s Centres have been getting involved. Staff have been showing youngsters how to clean their teeth properly and have put on fun activities to emphasise the importance of good oral hygiene.

Anne Parker, children’s support worker at Maple Trees Children’s Centre said: “The children have really enjoyed learning how to use a toothbrush properly as they have practised on a set of large teeth. We have also had a larger range of healthy snacks to offer at break times to introduce the children to more foods which are less harmful to their teeth.”

In Bolton, Cahill Dental Care had a stand at Bolton’s Market Hall offering people free dental advice.

As well as offering the people of Bolton an opportunity to discuss dental procedures such as implants and invisalign, there was also a competition to win a free course of tooth whitening.
Editorial comment

Indecent exposure

There has been a few talking points in dentistry this week with the new research into the risk of thyroid cancer from dental radiographs and the profession being high in the headlines for different reasons.

The research into radiographs, although published with a caveat that more research was needed to fully validate the results, for me opens up the interesting conundrum for dental professionals. The technology used in radiographic equipment has brought down the exposure dose dramatically, and with an increased need for recording a patient’s condition in case of litigation, it’s no wonder that the use of radiographs is on the rise. Then when research such as this surfaces, questions are asked about the use or overuse of radiographs! Does the phrase ‘rock and a hard place’ sound familiar?

Dentistry seems to be hitting the news again recently, with fraud charges totalling £1m levelled at a dentist and a dental technician before the GDC for harassment one of his employees with invites to swinger parties. There have been some good news too, with lots of positive National Smile Month messages finding their way into local and national press. Nice to see that oral health has a plus side in non-dental media! Now all we need is a link between dentistry and England winning the World Cup this year.

Dental nurse scholarship established

The British Dental Association Education has set up the Ann Felton Scholarship for dental nurses.

The dental nurse who is awarded this prize will be given a free place on the British Dental Association (BDA) Education’s online Oral Health Education (OHE) course and free entry to the exam, worth £755, which leads to the NEBDN Certificate in OHE.

This scholarship has been developed in recognition of the outstanding contribution made by Ann Felton to the dental profession and to careers of dental nurses across the county.

In order to be eligible for this prize, any dental nurse applying needs to explain, using a maximum of 250 words, how they would use the OHE Scholarship to advance their career.

A spokeswoman for the BDA said: “Perhaps you would like to gain confidence and develop a greater understanding of a wide range of oral health conditions and diseases. Maybe you aspire to set up a preventative dental unit in your practice. Or perhaps you harbour ambitions to become a practice manager or a leader in the field of oral health education. Take this opportunity to take one step further towards achieving your goals. BDA Education would be delighted to hear from you if you are interested in applying for the Ann Felton Scholarship. We will be looking for a proven commitment to oral health education as well as an indication that you have the potential and the ability to progress in your chosen career.”

To apply, complete the downloadable application form on the BDA website and send it to BDA Education, 64 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 8YS by 30 June 2010.

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Orthodontic charity filmed by BBC in Africa

BBC presenter Ben Fogle has been out in Africa following the work of the orthodontic charity, Facing Africa.

The television programme Make Me a New Face: Hope for Africa’s Hidden Children was shown on BBC Two.

In 2008, Ben Fogle caught a flesh-eating disease called Leishmaniasis which, if untreated, would have destroyed his face.

In the TV programme, Ben investigates a sickness that’s far worse but virtually unheard of - Noma, which eats away the faces of thousands of Africa’s poorest children.

Mr Thom was part of the advance team carrying out full medical, dental and social assessments, putting the patients on a high protein feeding regime and a deworming programme as well as clerking, photographing and assessing the degree of loss of jaw movement.

A spokeswoman for the charity said: “It was considered essential to establish a healthy dental environment for surgery and extractions were performed where as necessary as well as plaque removal and oral hygiene.

‘Each patient was given their own hygiene pack and tooth brushing was supervised daily. Some had never seen a toothbrush and were used to using, on occasions, a soft twig.”

Two weeks later the surgical team arrived and they took over the operating theatres of one of the main hospitals in Addis Ababa.

The surgical team were interna- tional with surgeons, anaesthet- ists and nurses from the UK, France, Holland and Norway.

The team carried out more than 50 facial reconstructions.

Unsealed jaws were released, facial defects repaired, tumours re- moved and cleft palates repaired.

For more information on the work of Facing Africa, visit www. facingafrica.org.

Treating gum disease can help diabetics

Treating serious gum disease in people with diabetes mellitus can help to reduce high blood sugar levels, according to a new study.

The study carried out by an inter-university research team including the UCL Eastman Dental Institute and Penin- sula Dental School, looked at previous research into the link between diabetes and serious gum disease.

Up to 90 per cent of Noma victims die, while survivors are left terribly disfigured.

Every year, British charity Facing Africa sends top cosmetic surgeons to Africa to treat those who are affected.

Consultant orthodontist, Al- lan Thom, who is a past presi- dent of the British Orthodontic Soci- ety, helped set up the organisation.

The TV crew filmed three children whose lives have been blighted by this disease - teenager Rashid, who is forced to hide his face in pub- lic; Asnake, aged 11, whose mis- shaped mouth makes him dri- bble constantly; and 10-year-old Mestikma, abandoned by her family because of her deformity.

These children join other Noma victims in Addis Ababa for the radical transfor- mative surgery.

Mr Thom said: “It was considered essential to establish a healthy dental environment for surgery and extractions were performed where as necessary as well as plaque removal and oral hygiene.

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The study carried out by an inter-university research team including the UCL Eastman Dental Institute and Penin- sula Dental School, looked at previous research into the link between diabetes and serious gum disease.

The results showed that there is a small but potential- ly highly important benefit to treating periodontal disease in diabetic patients.

However, further research needs to be conducted in order to fully establish the link between the two conditions.

Currently, it is thought that dental inflammation, caused by bacteria infecting the mouth, re- sults in chemical changes that reduce the overall effectiveness of insulin, thus leading to raised blood sugar levels.

Dental treatment to reduce oral inflammation may therefore help to lower blood sugar levels. This means a decrease in the overall risk of contracting seri- ous health complications associ- ated with the condition, including heart disease and eye problems.

Prof Ian Needleman from the UCL Eastman Dental In- stitute called the research ‘particularly timely’ because ‘periodontal disease now affects at least 40 per cent of the UK population, and for people with diabetes the disease levels will be significantly higher’.

He added: “Furthermore, levels of diabetes in the UK are rising rapidly and with higher prevalence amongst disadvan- taged groups, periodontal health is an important priority both for prevention and treat- ment. Periodontal disease is also very treatable.

‘Whilst the most important aspect of insulin control in dia- betes management is the use of drugs and diet, maintaining good dental health is something patients and healthcare profes- sionals should also recognise, particularly because it is so easy to treat’

The findings, which have been published as part of the in- ternational ‘Cochrane Collabora- tion’, highlight the need for doc- tors and dentists to work together in the treatment of diabetes.

In a separate case, Mr An- thony Woodland, of West Quay, Bridgewater, Somerset, pleaded guilty at Bridgewater Magistrates Court on 28 May to the offence of holding himself out as being prepared to practise dentistry – in that he was prepared to give treatment in connection with the fitting, inset- ting and fixing of dentures.

Mr Forman was conditionally discharged for six months and ordered to pay £700 in costs.

A magistrates’ court has fined a man £3,000 for practising dentistry illegally.

Robin Baldwin was found guilty at King’s Lynn Magis- trates Court of practising den- tistry illegally.

He was found guilty of being prepared to practice den- tistry at Greyfriars Surgery, 5 Tower Place, King’s Lynn, Norfolk.

He was also found guilty of unlawfully using the title of dental surgeon on a business card.

Mr Baldwin was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £3,195.40 to- wards the General Dental Coun- cil (GDC’s) costs.

The GDC has now success- fully prosecuted six cases of illegal practice in the last three months.

This includes Neville Forman of Beechwood Barn, North Moor Lane, Lincoln, who pleaded guilty to the offence of holding himself out as being prepared to practise dentistry – in that he was prepared to give treatment in connection with the fitting, in- setting and fixing of dentures.

Mr Forman was conditionally discharged for six months and ordered to pay £700 in costs.

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In addition he also pleaded guilty to unlawfully using a spec- ified title, namely that of ‘dental technician’. Mr Woodland was fined £1,000 for each offence.