Piercing damage

Every fourth person with a piercing in the tongue or lips revealed symptoms such as gum bleeding claims a new study. The 400 patients surveyed aged 20 years on average showed that 13.9 per cent of them had broken teeth or other dental complications. Dental professionals are warned of the increasing number of patients with oral piercings, and to provide appropriate guidance to patients regarding the health risks.

Poor parenting

Parents are failing to help their young children look after their teeth according to the National Dental Survey 2008. It found that more than 20 per cent of under-five-year-olds are being left to brush unsupervised. A quarter of parents believe that children do not need to brush twice a day, 25 per cent think there is no need for them to avoid fizzy drinks, while 67 per cent believe that brushing for just one minute is recommended.

Child neglect

Dentists and dental care professionals are well placed to identify possible abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults - and have a responsibility to raise their concerns if they do, said the General Dental Council (GDC). All registrants should know who to contact for advice if they have concerns about potential abuse or neglect, says the GDC in a new statement on child protection.

Perio link

Rheumatoid arthritis is the latest condition where there appears to be a link with periodontal disease says new research. The 400 patients surveyed - aged 20 years on average - showed that 13.9 per cent of them had broken teeth or other dental complications. Dental professionals are warned of the increasing number of patients with oral piercings, and to provide appropriate guidance to patients regarding the health risks.

LDCs call for revolution freedom

From left to right: Laura Crouch, Gyles Brandreth, TV personality and Guest Speaker, and Dr Crouch and his wife, Jane Crouch.

Eddie Crouch received rousing cheers at the Conference of local dental committees (LDCs) following his speech on the state of NHS dentistry.

Speaking to delegates at the pre-Conference dinner, he said: ‘The whole new contracting arrangement was about securing state control over NHS dentistry - control of where and how NHS dentistry is delivered and how much public money is spent on it. But he added: ‘The level of control that was introduced affects all of us who still work within the NHS.’

Chairman of this year’s Conference of LDCs, Dr Crouch had harsh words for the Department of Health (DoH), its minister and the chief dental officer. But the British Dental association (BDA) and its general dental practice committee (GDPC) also failed to escape the wrath of his words.

Referring to the minister, Ann Keen, who had provisionally accepted his invitation to attend the conference six months ago he said: ‘It is dentistry important to this government or is it just one more of this Government’s public statements that must be questioned?’

Having tried both in 2005 and 2006 to galvanise the BDA and GDPC into action over the new contract, Dr Crouch was clearly unimpressed.

He said: ‘The GDPC’s failure to recognise the depth of feeling at that LDC Conference is deeply worrying.’ He added: ‘Do the BDA committees actually make policy decisions and set political direction in the way dentists want anyway?’

Nevertheless, he thanked the BDA for assisting his court case as an interested party. He said: ‘I did not expect them to pay my costs but it was the judge who thought they should help.’

Dr Crouch thanked all the ‘wonderful people’ who had supported him through his Judicial Review. ‘The letters of encouragement and the generous financial assistance from dozens and dozens of supporters have helped me and my family immensely,’ he said.

In conclusion, Dr Crouch said that it would be a sad day ‘when dentists queue up for IT training in presessional skills to impress primary care trusts with business plans and box ticking exercises, instead of improving clinical skills on postgraduate courses to provide better care for their patients.’

The theme of Evolution, not Revolution, was reflected at the conference the day after. Talks of working with the Doll and accepting that the contract is here to stay were top of the list.

More people than ever before came forward to say that the new arrangements could work - despite serious misgivings.

The set tone was amplified by Lester Elliot, chair of the General Dental Practice Committee (GDPC). He said: ‘We need change - not a knee-jerk, panic-stricken, untried and tested change. We need evolution, not revolution.’ (See page two for more on this speech).

Meanwhile, the conference agenda committee is to take over and manage all future conference events. This includes the responsibility that ‘conference resolutions will be considered expeditiously by the GDPC or other appropriate bodies.’

The unprecedented move, means the committee can now liaise directly with the Doll and its ministers, instead of relying on the GDPC.

Conference elected Jerry Asquith to chair the conference in 2009, and Richard Emmens the following year.

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