Dentists treating children urged to look out for child abuse

Dentists treating children should check for tell tale signs of neglect as they could be warning signs of wider neglect and child abuse, according to child protection experts.

A new policy urging dentists to look for signs of neglect, when treating children with severe oral disease, has been published in the International Journal of Paediatric Dentistry.

Dental neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic oral health needs.

Oral disease can have a significant impact on the health of a child and can cause severe pain, loss of sleep and even reductions in body weight and growth.

Dr Peter Sidebotham from the University of Warwick co-authored the policy document on dental neglect in children for the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry.

He calls for dentists to refer cases to child protection services if they have any concerns.

The document, which is thought to be the first of its kind in Europe, is the result of a collaboration between the University of Warwick, the University of Sheffield and Leeds Dental Institute.

Dr Sidebotham said: ‘There is evidence which indicates that abused children have higher levels of untreated dental disease than their non-abused peers. Many dentists have taken part in child protection training, but still find it difficult to put into practice what they have learned when they suspect abuse.’

The policy details the numerous factors that need to be taken into account when assessing a child with suspected dental neglect and gives guidance on how the dental team should respond.

Dr Sidebotham added: ‘I am impressed by how much dentists already do to educate and support parents. But when concerned that a child is suffering, perhaps as a result of missed appointments, I would always encourage them to seek advice from other health professionals experience in child protection and, if necessary, to make a child protection referral.’

New endodontics clinic opens

The opening was attended by more than 50 of Dr Bhanderi’s referring general dentists plus the business coach Chris Barrow.

Dr Bhanderi’s referred patients come from a wide catchment area from as far as North Wales, Lancashire, as well as locally from Manchester and Cheshire. He has established Endo 61 for easy accessibility close to the major motorways around South Manchester.

Dr Bhanderi said: “The dental surgery is usually the last place where referred patients want to be, so I wanted to create an environment that would make their experience with me as comfortable as possible.”

He has an ongoing commitment to the teaching of postgraduate endodontics with the University of Manchester and Endo 61 is already used for teaching visiting postgraduate students.

The patient lounge and consultation rooms on the ground floor are equipped to double-up as teaching rooms with LCD displays that can stream live procedures performed by Dr Bhanderi under his operating microscope in his operating upstairs. Two further surgeries on the ground floor have been fitted with operating microscopes and digital cameras, which have the same AV capability for one-to-one endodontic/microscope training.

“Teaching the art of endodontics has been a passion since I completed my own training in 1997 and I am extremely delighted to have the opportunity to design a practice where I can enjoyably ‘spread the word’ to my colleagues and patients,” said Dr Bhanderi.

He is course leader for the MSc/PDip. in Endodontontology at the University of Central Lancashire, and honorary clinical teacher for the University of Manchester Endodontics programme, and lectures all over the North West and internationally. He is on the Council of the British Endodontic Society and Chairman of the North West Endodontic Study group.

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New NHS practice opens in Birmingham

A new NHS dental practice has opened in Selly Oak in Birmingham.

Midlands Smile Centre in Selly Oak is part of a chain of several dental practices owned by Dr Greg Fickert.

About 70 per cent of the dental work carried out by the chain is NHS work and the rest is private, mainly made up white fillings and white crowns, tooth whitening, implants and orthodontic work.

Dr Fickert commented: “The team here at Midlands Smile Centre could not be more delighted with the new look of the practice. It was designed to provide an environment where patients can be confident they are receiving the highest standards of treatment.”

The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress of Birmingham officially opened the practice.

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Interim guidance on CBCT scanners

The Health Protection Agency has come up with interim guidance for dentists using or planning to install dental cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) scanners.

These CBCT scanners are now being installed and used in a growing number of dental practices within the UK.

There is currently little guidance available for dentists on the different radiation protection requirements needed for this type of radiography equipment.

In a report by the Health Protection Agency (HPA), John Holroyd of the Radiation Protection Division said: “Suitable guidance is urgently needed to ensure that appropriate radiation safety measures are in place for the protection of staff and patients, and to advise practices using CBCT scanners with respect to radiation safety legislation.”

“Working procedures and precautions that are well-established for conventional dental x-ray equipment will in many circumstances not be adequate for CBCT.”

Formal guidance for the UK is expected later this year, following a consultation exercise.

Mr Holroyd said: “However, due to the increasing popularity of CBCT equipment and the current vacuum of official guidance, the HPA felt it was vital to make dentists using or planning to install CBCT equipment aware of the most important issues as soon as possible.”

The interim guide, which can be downloaded from the BDA website, looks at how to select appropriate equipment, including the selection of a suitable field of view (FOV), exposure parameters and resolution settings and the establishment of a suitable quality assurance programme to ensure regular testing of the equipment is carried out.

It also discusses training requirements for all persons involved in the use of CBCT, including operators and those performing clinical evaluation of images and the legislative compliance when dealing with referrals from other dental practices.

Distinguished service award for ortho technician

The chief orthodontic technician at the Royal London Hospital has been given the Orthodontic Technician Award for Distinguished Service.

Kieran McLaughlin became the first orthodontic technician to gain an MSc, graduating from the Queen Mary University of London Faculty of Medicine in 1994. Since 1995 he has worked with Dr Ama Johal and Dr Joanna Battagel designing appliances for the treatment of obstructive sleep apnoea; and he has also worked with Dr Neville Bass on developing the Dynamax appliance.

David Bearn, chair of the Scholarships and Grants Committee of the BOS commented: “The Committee conferred the 2009 Award on Kieran McLaughlin in recognition of the huge and on-going contribution he has made to the profession and we salute his achievements over an incredible thirty years of service.”

Mr McLaughlin has taught all aspects of orthodontic appliance design and construction to undergraduate and postgraduate dental students as well as student dental technicians at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry for more than twenty years, and has almost thirty years of experience in orthodontic technology.

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