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News & Opinions

Fluoridation expert visit

One of the world’s leading experts on fluoride flew over to Southampton from the US to voice his views on the city’s current consultation on whether to add fluoride to its tap water to improve dental health.

Dr Paul Connett, who is fiercely against fluoridation, is director of Fluoride Action Network and a retired professor of chemistry at St Lawrence University in New York. He has spoken about fluoride at conferences across the globe since he began researching its health impact more than 10 years ago.

Dr Connett believes that fluoride is attractive to Primary Care Trusts, because they do not have to bother educating parents or improving living family conditions.

He said: “There is a far stronger relationship between tooth decay and living standards than you will ever find between tooth decay and fluoride. The answer should be to target vulnerable children in low income families and make sure that pregnant women in those areas get a good diet.”

He thinks it is not right to force fluoride on people who may be sensitive to it or who do not want it, because it can cause serious side-effects such as lowering IQ and fluorosis.

Dr Connett is keen to see in-depth studies of fluoride’s side effects and claims there has been no research as to whether fluoride can stop decay in growing teeth cells, without damaging other tissue.

He said: “Countries that have had fluoridation since 1950 have never done the basic studies to check this hypothesis out. If you don’t study it properly, you don’t notice the subtle changes.”

He claims studies from countries that do not fluoridate their water but have naturally high levels of fluoride, have been ignored, such as 25 studies done in China, India, Iran and Mexico focusing fluoride lowers IQ levels in children.

He called upon the strategic health authority to show its impartiality by having a balanced debate.

Ambleside dentistry increase

Campaigners in Ambleside have celebrated the opening of a new dental surgery with 2,000 NHS places. Mint Dental Practice, which also has practices in Barrow and Windermere, has opened its Ambleside branch at the Old Quaker House in Rydal Road.

Westmorland and Lonsdale MP, Tim Farron, who officially opened the surgery, said it was a triumph for everyone who had put pressure on Cumbria Primary Care Trust (PCT) to keep a surgery in Ambleside. On behalf of residents, he lobbied the PCT, along with South Lakeland District councillors, Viviene Rees and David Vatcher, following the closure of an NHS dental surgery earlier this year. The PCT were previously not planning to open new dental surgery in Ambleside, but instead to provide more NHS places in Windermere. But members changed their minds when more than 2,000 residents appealed for the service to stay.

Mr Farron said: “This is an important victory for local people. I am delighted that people in Ambleside and the surrounding villages will continue to have access to good quality, local NHS dentistry. This is further proof that when communities stand together and campaign hard, they can win.”

Eric Rooney, consultant in dental public health at NHS Cumbria, said Mint’s opening illustrated the organisation’s commitment to meeting the needs of the local population. A further 11,600 NHS dental places are expected to become available to the county’s patients over the next 12 months.

Oral probiotic helps Xerostomia symptoms

A new product claims to reduce Xerostomia, (dry mouth) a condition carrying an increased risk of periodontitis and dental caries, because oral mucosa are more vulnerable to infection and saliva is no longer re-mineralizing tooth enamel. Often, it is not possible to correct the Xerostomia itself so treatment focuses on relieving the symptoms and preventing damage to the gums and teeth.

Oral health probiotic gum, PerioBalance, contains Lactobacillus reuteri Prodenis, documented in clinical studies to help restore the natural balance of the mouth and reduce bacterial plaque build-up. Sufferers of dry mouth have reported relief by using the product, which is accredited by The British Dental Health Foundation. Patients with Xerostomia should pay attention to oral hygiene and avoid the use of decongestants and antihistamines. Drinking water can make the dry mouth more uncomfortable, but frequently sipping sugarless fluids, chewing xylitol-containing chewing gum and using saliva substitutes as a mouthwash have been found to help.

Xerostomia can be caused by conditions including diabetes or other causes of insufficient saliva such as anxiety, some medications, radiation therapy, as well as consumption of alcohol or various drugs. It may also result from ageing. For more information about Periobalance, log onto: www.sunstargum.co.uk or call 01677 424 446.

Scottish phobia dentists

Specially-trained dentists are on hand at a brand new £1 million walk-in surgery in Bonnyrigg, Midlothian in the Lothians to help patients who are scared of going to the dentist.

Mild sedation is offered as an option at the new surgery, Phobia dentists also use a variety of other methods to help patients relax, which can include scented oils, relaxing music or aromatherapy.

The new facility, which offers NHS care as well as specialist dental services, is made-up of five purpose-built surgeries within the former Bonnyrigg Health Centre, with a team of 20 dental professionals. As well as treatment for dental phobics, the practice offers specialist care for the elderly, frail people and children, as well as an emergency facility for unregistered patients.