Editorial comment

The issue of mouth cancer is dominating the dental press, with November being Mouth Cancer Action Month and the high-profile launch taking place at the Houses of Parliament, bringing together all facets of the profession, trade, academia, politics and press in the common cause of raising awareness of the condition.

It’s not just the fact that it is a form of cancer – mouth cancer seems to rip at the very heart of being human. Victims look so different not only because of the treatment required but areas of the face often need to be cut away; necessary functions such as swallowing and eating become a nightmare as salivary glands are destroyed through radiotherapy; and the fear that comes with the high mortality rate of oral cancer due to it often being discovered too late take a terrible toll on sufferers and their families. If every dental practice engaged in screening their patients and saved the life of just one per practice through early detection or reduced a person’s chances of developing the disease through patient awareness, wouldn’t it be worth the time?

Send me your stories of getting involved in the campaign – lisa@dentaltribuneuk.com.

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Tunnel Dentition

The news of the trapped Chilean miners’ gripped the hearts of nations across the world as thousands followed their ordeal; however, since their rescue, their problems aren’t quite over.

Many of the rescued Chilean miners are now suffering from gum disease due to a lack of toothbrushes. All 33 miners had been unable to brush their teeth until rescuers were able to get much needed supplies down into the mine.

During the first 17 days underground none of the 33 trapped miners were able to brush their teeth and the absence of toothbrushes resulted in gum disease for a number of the men.

“The world has been transfixed by the plight of the 53 Chilean miners trapped nearly half a mile underground since August 5th and it was heartening to witness their rescue,” a spokesperson for oral healthcare products Eludril and Elgydium told reporters.

“It is anticipated that all 33 will make a full recovery but living in a tunnel for nearly 10 weeks has obviously taken its toll on their physical and mental health. One of the many health problems they now face is that of gum disease.”

Since the men were rescued, one of the first priorities has been full dental check-ups, including the removal of plaque to help restore the health of their gums.

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Do you have an opinion or something to say on any Dental Tribune UK article? Or would you like to write your own opinion for our guest comment page?

If so don’t hesitate to write to:
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Help the homeless this Christmas

Specialist volunteers are urgently needed to donate their services to help homeless people in London over the festive season as part of Crisis At Christmas, running from Thursday 23 December – Thursday 30 December 2010.

As part of Crisis At Christmas, up to nine temporary centres will be set up in London. The centres will provide vital companionship and hot meals for homeless and vulnerably housed people, as well as essential services like health checks, housing advice, training and further education opportunities.

To build on the success of 2009, when more than 260 patients received dental treatment, Crisis is looking for qualified dentists, dental nurses and hygienists to help run the Dental Service at Crisis At Christmas this year. Shifts run from 9am to 5.30pm from Friday 24th December through to Wednesday 29 December with a minimum of two shifts.

Mary first volunteered with the opportunity to chat to the guests and other volunteers, a truly rich experience."

Leslie Morphy, Chief Executive of Crisis, said: “Crisis At Christmas would be impossible without the time and dedication shown year in, year out by our thousands of volunteers. They provide invaluable companionship and services to some of society’s most vulnerable people, but also gain much from the experience in return.”

To find out more about volunteering at Crisis At Christmas email: cvolunteering@crisis.org.uk or apply online: www.crisis.org.uk/volunteering. If you do not have internet access call: 0844 892 8980.

Celebrity smiles not always perfect

Celebrity styles have a massive impact on what is perceived as beautiful and fashionable. In the past, cosmetic dental surgery was deemed to improve the aesthetic look of patient’s teeth, making them whiter and straighter, however, recent celebrity ideals have somewhat changed.

With regards to the ideal look, in the past having a large gap between your front teeth was seen as an unattractive trait; however models, such as Jess Hart, Lara Stone and Georgie Gaggero, who have a natural gap in their teeth, have turned their natural gap into the “must have” look.

Because of this sudden craze, cosmetic dental procedures like implants and models are having brackets inserted between their front teeth to widen the gap. Dentists in America have even reported that veneers with slight staining, grooves and overlaps are also growing in popularity.

However, the gappy smile seems to have divided public opinion; for many people a noticeable gap between their teeth may not be seen as such a blessing and many result in opting for treatment to correct their gap.

The sort after look is now the “character face”, and having a gap between your teeth is said to be the must-have orthodontic trait du jour.

Celebrities such as Kanye West have also made fashion statements with regards to their teeth. Recently, reports detailed that Kanye asked his dentist to pull his bottom row of teeth out and replace them with diamond ones.

According to reports, Kanye’s latest accessory will send out the message that it is ok to replace your natural teeth with implants. In fact, dentists are continually trying to encourage people to maintain good oral health and keep hold of their natural teeth.

Over the years, preserving the patients’ natural teeth has become a message that is widely stressed by many dentists and cosmetic dentists alike, with the notion of pulling a tooth completely out being the absolute final option.

Smiles all round at the BOC

Orthodontist Dr Richard Jones celebrated a double win at the British Orthodontic Conference in Brighton last month, winning both the Special Service Award and the prestigious President’s Cup.

Dr Jones, who is Chairman of Total Orthodontics, was delighted to learn that he had picked up not one but two awards at the four-day conference which was held at The Brighton Centre.

The Special Service Award was presented by President Jonathan of the British Orthodontic Society in recognition of the work he has done for the society over the past year. More recently, he took on the role of Chairman for the Orthodontic Practice Committee, which represents the political interests of the society, liaising with the Department of Health and Primary Care Trusts on orthodontic issues. Dr Jones also played a pivotal role in representing the BOS in negotiations regarding the national NHS contract in orthodontics.

It is for these reasons that Dr Jones also picked up the President’s Cup, which is presented annually to an individual selected by the president of the BOS for outstanding service.

Mrs Zoë Tickner, practice manager at Total Orthodontics Horsham, also had reason to celebrate after taking first place in a National Orthodontic Nursing Competition at the same conference.

The Orthodontic Nursing Award, which is sponsored by 5M Unitek, aims to recognise best practice in orthodontic nursing. To reach the final Zoë, who is also the group nursing manager at Total Orthodontics, was asked to submit an outline for a proposed presentation on a topic of her choice. Five finalists were then selected to present at the British Orthodontic Conference.

Zoë’s chosen topic was ‘An Introduction to HTM 01-05 – Contamination Guidance in Orthodontic Practice’, where she outlined the required standards in decontamination for orthodontic practices and how to achieve best practice.

Zoë’s prize, which included a cheque for £300, was presented to her by Des Creighton, the UK Sales and Marketing Manager for 5M Unitek.
Dentists can avoid complaints escalating through clear communications

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman’s review of complaint handling by the NHS published this week serves as a reminder for dental practices to pay close attention to their complaints procedures, says Dental Protection. It also highlights the importance of good, clear communications as a means of avoiding complaints escalating, and that local resolution is the best approach.

Hugh Harvie, Head of Dental Services, said, “Patient complaints are a common issue with which we frequently assist members – last year we received more than 4,000 enquiries about complaints handling in general practice.

“Our experience of complaints escalating due to poor communication mirrors the findings in the Ombudsman’s report. We regularly see letters of response from clinicians which are defensive in tone, or simply fail to acknowledge the patient’s concerns. Issues such as poor explanations, incomplete responses, and factual errors are factors that can prompt a patient to take the matter higher, particularly if they feel their complaint is not being taken seriously.

“We also know that an apology is often what the patient is seeking, along with assurance that what they have experienced will not happen to anyone else. This is evident from the Ombudsman’s report, where the leading recommendation was for the patient to receive an apology, followed by action to put things right.”

To coincide with the Ombudsman’s report, Dental Protection has revised its range of advice booklets on handling complaints. Members of the dental team can download an advice booklet specific to the region of the UK in which they practice (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland). They are free of charge to members and non-members alike and available here www.tinyurl.com/33eu2do.

Morris and Co expand

Specialist Dental Accountants Morris and Co are on the move. Their Chester home of 25 years has been exchanged for purpose-built offices next to the Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet Shopping Centre near Ellesmere Port. The move has many advantages for Morris and Co and their clients, with the extra space to cater for the firm’s ongoing expansion.

The Morris and Co dental team consists of 21 people led by Senior Partner Nick Ledingham supported by three colleagues, Bob Cummings, Sara Parrott and Chris Shaw. Between them, they work for many hundreds of dentists throughout the UK.

Nick Ledingham, who is also Chairman of the National Association of Specialist Dental Accountants, said: “Although we do most of our work electronically, we still have to keep meticulous paper records on behalf of our clients. The need for storage space to house our paperwork and reference library combined with the need for space for team members makes the move imperative.”

Visit www.dentalwebinars.co.uk to find out more and to book your place.
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Consultation expected to lead to piloting of new dental contracts in 2011

Dentists’ leaders in Northern Ireland have welcomed the launch of the long-awaited consultation on piloting new dental contract arrangements.

The Health and Social Care Board’s consultation runs until 51 January, 2011. It is expected to lead to the piloting of general dental services, orthodontic and oral surgery pilots next year with new contracts being developed for 2013 pending successful evaluation.

While pleased that progress is being made, the British Dental Association in Northern Ireland believes that much hard work lies ahead before and during the pilot phase.

Peter Crooks, Chair of the BDA Northern Ireland Dental Practice Committee, said:

“The BDA has long argued for dental care in Northern Ireland.

“Practices need a sustainable future as businesses with a working environment for dentists and their teams which deliver the modern, preventive care our patients seek.”

Skills for Health is urging healthcare employers to begin preparing for the introduction of new health and health-related vocational qualifications for the sector from January 2011.

More than 25 new vocational qualifications - including ‘replacement’ NVQs - will be launched in the New Year on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), the new framework for all vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

With two months to go until the new health vocational qualifications go live, employers are being urged to update their training and development plans, and to explore how the new framework can help them develop a more productive and flexible workforce delivering better patient care.

Skills for Health Director for Qualifications Strategy, Anne Eaton, said: “The QCF and these new vocational qualifications present a genuine opportunity for employers to be smarter and leaner in their training and development activities.

“Using the flexible unit-based approach of the QCF, employers will be able to get greater impact from limited training budgets, while also designing their workforce training and development activities more closely around patient need.

“It will also benefit staff, who will be able to learn at a pace that suits them and to transfer credit between qualifications to avoid having to repeat their learning.”

Skills for Health has worked with a range of partner organisations during the last year to transition existing vocational qualifications to the new framework. The new health and health-related qualifications to be published to the QCF include Awards, Certificates and Diplomas at both Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE at grades A-C or BTEC First Certificate) and Level 3 (equivalent to A Level or BTEC National Certificate/Diploma). Subjects range from Health Informatics to Emergency Care Assistance, Maternity and Paediatric Support and Optical Retail Skills.

The new qualifications are approved by the Qualifications Regulator for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and are recognised by regulators and workforce development organisations as the benchmark for the sector.

Within Scotland where the QCF does not apply, qualifications will continue to be regulated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Skills for Health will continue to work with employers and Awarding Organisations to develop new qualifications for the framework in the future.

* Skills for Health is holding workshops in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during November and December to help healthcare employers explore the QCF and new vocational qualifications, and the benefits they offer. For further details, see www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/events

GDC’s new CEO and Registrar takes office

The UK’s dental regulator, the General Dental Council (GDC) has today welcomed its new Chief Executive and Registrar Evlynne Gilvarry.

Evlynne is joining the GDC from the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), the statutory regulator of osteopathy in the UK, where she’d worked as Chief Executive and Registrar since November 2007. Previously she worked in various senior policy and management roles at the Law Society, the regulator and professional body for solicitors in England and Wales. She is a qualified lawyer and mediator.

For media enquiries, please contact Moira Alderson on 020 7009 2756 or email malderson@gdc-uk.org

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