Editorial comment

The news of the trapped Chilean miners’ gripping 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 53 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 53 will make a full recovery but living in a tunnel for nearly 10 weeks has obviously taken its toll on sufferers and their families. 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.

The issue of gum disease that the miners now face will undoubtedly remind the public how quickly gum disease can develop when you don’t brush your teeth. Hopefully their story will demonstrate the importance of proper dental healthcare and the benefits of regularly brushing your teeth.

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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 by Crisis, a charity for single homeless people. 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 30th December with a minimum of two shifts.

Mary first volunteered with her husband Alan in 2008 and the experience had a profound effect on them both. She said; “Volunteering for the dental service has been a great privilege, being probably the most professionally and emotionally rewarding experience of my entire year. Suddenly being released from the normal box of the dental surgery, the opportunity of being able to help people, knowing that we are offering a vital service to people who can find access to dentistry difficult, is immensely rewarding, emotionally if not financially. Losing the normal time constraints of the practice of dentistry allows the opportunity to chat to the guests and other volunteers, a truly rich experience.”

Lleisure 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: ccvolunteering@crisis.org.uk or apply online: www.crisis.org.uk/volunteering. If you do not have internet access call: 0844 892 8960.

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 desired to improve the aesthetic look of patient’s teeth, making them whiter and straighter, however, recent trends 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 Georgia Jagger, 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 have increased 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 completely out being the absolute craze.

According to reports, Kanye West said that he thought it would be cooler to have his teeth pulled out and replaced with diamond implants.

However, it is feared that 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 to Dr Jones by the British Orthodontic Society in recognition of the work he has done for the society over the past year. Most 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, 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.

Zoe’s prize, which included a cheque for £500, 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/3eu2zd.

Dental Protection advises dental practices to:

1. Acknowledge complaints promptly, and keep good records of communications.
2. Ensure responses are clear, accurate, and not defensive.
3. Always acknowledge the patient’s concerns and any errors made.
4. Offer an apology if appropriate, alongside remedial action.
5. Ensure that patients are made aware of their right to escalate complaints if dissatisfied.

“The Ombudsman’s report is a wake-up call to all dental practices,” said Hugh Harvie. “The need for clear communications cannot be overemphasised.”

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.”

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The AOG and Smile-on in association with The Dental Directory bring you

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www.clinicalinnovations.co.uk
or call 020 7400 8967
Consultation expected to lead to piloting of new dental contracts in 2011

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.

“The flexible unit-based approach of the QCF will enable employers 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

Countdown to new vocational qualifications for the health sector

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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

GDC’s new CEO and Registrar takes office

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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