‘If in doubt, get checked out’

Dental Tribune’s Laura Hatton sets the scene for Mouth Cancer Action Month in November

As the front page shows, this November Mouth Cancer Action Month officially began at the Houses of Parliament and was hosted by the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF). Along with the Mouth Cancer Foundation, the campaign will be raising awareness of mouth cancer. The BDHF will be promoting the campaign and tagline ‘If in doubt, get checked out’ to raise awareness of the disease.

Currently in the UK, mouth cancer kills one person every five hours, and less than half of those diagnosed with the disease survive beyond five years of diagnosis.

Recent studies have shown that drinking, smoking, and unhealthy diets have doubled mouth, throat and food pipe cancer cases in young people. Furthermore, links between oral sex and mouth cancer have recently been discovered.

These worrying figures show that action needs to be taken.

So far the Mouth Cancer Foundation has organised its annual sponsored Mouth Cancer 10KM Awareness Walk and throughout November wristbands, t-shirts and posters will be available to help promote Action Month, all of which sport the blue logo.

Denplan are also taking part in Mouth Cancer Action Month and in a bid to ensure that the campaign receives maximum exposure they are distributing approximately 50,000 MCAM posters to dentists, doctors, hospitals, PCTs and many other health professionals across the UK. Encouraging people to visit their dentist or GP to check any areas of concern in the mouth, the posters highlight the key facts and risks associated with mouth cancer.

Awareness
Stepping into reality, the high profile case of Michael Douglas has recently brought oral cancer out of the shadows and into the news and health experts are hoping that the public will start opening their eyes to the existence of mouth cancer – too many people are simply convinced it could never happen to them.

“One study has not heard of mouth cancer, and do not realise how common it is – latest figures show that over 5,300 cases are diagnosed in the UK in a year”

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How your practice can help
Throughout Action Month dentists can play a vital role in saving lives by providing routine screenings for mouth cancer and to educate themselves on the symptoms of mouth cancer so they can inform their patients and help save lives. Denplan has provided a template which practices can send to the press so they can advertise that they are offering free screenings. The template is available at www.denplan.co.uk.

Dentists can also take part in the Blue Ribbon Badge Appeal to circulate awareness. Once they have registered they will be posted a kit which includes:

- One collection box
- 25 X enamel blue ribbon lapel pins

AWARENESS WALK in Mouth Cancer Action Month

“Early diagnosis saves lives, the BDHF is encouraging people to take part in the Blue Ribbon Badge Appeal to raise both funds and awareness of mouth cancer.

Dr Carter said: “Public awareness of oral cancer and the associated risk factors appears to be too low here in the UK. An awareness of the risk factors and symptom recognition by the public is a critical issue in determining survival rates, as early detection greatly improves the chances of survival.”

To boost this information that dentists can share with their patients the BDHF provides a stand-up banner and a template for dentists to complete and put up in their surgery or practice.

To order your kit call 0800 281 020 or email info@mouthcancer.org.uk

DENPLAN HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN MOUTH CANCER AWARENESS

Early diagnosis saves lives, the BDHF is encouraging people to take part in the Blue Ribbon Badge Appeal to raise both funds and awareness of mouth cancer.
bages. • An official Mouth Cancer Ac -
badges. • Full set of instructions.

The badges can either be sold to raise money or they can be
given away to help raise aware -
ness. Either way, the badges
play a central role in the cam -
paign - sparking questions and
debates and most importantly,
promote the BDHF’s tagline
‘I’m doubt, get checked out.’ The
programme, ‘Oral Cancer – Pre-
vention. Examination. Referral’,
aims to raise awareness of oral
cancer and to most importantly,
increase screening.

In effect, it restores the com -
ponent of reality and under -
standing and provides interac -
tive learning and video diaries.
One video retells the story of
Ralph Goodson, who survived
oral cancer; the happy ending
is a definite mean to ensure that
early detection does save lives.

The 90 minute programme,
which was advised by Fiona
Clarke, the in-house advisor,
and Prof. Scully and Prof. Saman
Warnakulasuriya, is interac -
tive with videos and animations
and aims to offer an extensive
oral cancer learning resource
for healthcare professionals.
The programme is divided
into 4 topics: The Facts, Team
Approach, Examination Proce -
dure and Case Studies. There
are sections on communication
techniques – discussing cancer
prevention with patients, demon -
strative videos to carrying out an
oral mucosa examination, clini -
cal images and information on
the signs of potential cancer,
animations on cancer develop -
ment.

Screening technology
With the race to beat mouth can -
cer, new technology is emerg -
ning onto the medical scene and
into the hands of healthcare pro -
fessionals.

There is VELscope®, a
hand-held device, which was
developed in collaboration with
the British Columbia Cancer
Agency and MD Anderson Can -
cer Center. It is based on the
direct visualization of tissue fluo -
rescence and the changes in
fluorescence that occur when
abnormalities are present. The
clinician is then able to imme -
diately view the different fluo -
rescence responses to help dif -
ferentiate between normal and
abnormal tissue.

There is also ViziLite Plus
with TBline, which is an oral le -
sion identification and marking
system that is used as an ad -
junct to the conventional head
and neck examination. It is
comprised of a chemilumines -
cent light source (ViziLite) to
improve the identification of le -
sions and a blue phenothiazine
dye to mark those lesions identi -
fied by ViziLite oral cancer.

Alongside the many fundrais -
ering events and the Blue Ribbon Badge Ap -
peal, the public are also being encouraged to play their part through
self-examination; using the
case of Michael Douglas,
the BDHF are appeal -
ging to the public
to be aware of
early warn -
ing signs of
mouth cancer. Like
previous years, Ac -
tion Month aims to
lay bare the reality of
mouth cancer and re -
inforce the knowledge
that early detection saves lives.

Regular professional check -
ups and self-examinations are
the best route to early detec -
tion of mouth cancer. If it’s di -
agnosed within the early stages,
transplants can cure 90% of cases.

With this statistic in mind, there has never
been a more important time for
practice teams to support Mouth
Cancer Action Month.

A reason to smile
Sometimes the facts and figures of
oral cancer can over shadow
the human element of cancer
and the reality of the disease
can be lost under numbers, per -
centages, medical terms and possible outcomes, all of which
are far from an understandable
reality. In response to these is -
sues, Smile-on has teamed up
with BDHF, KSS Deanery and
the Dental Protection Legion
(DPL) to coincide with MCAM

The Mouth Cancer Action Month poster will be put up in dental practices across the UK

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