More fluoridation for the North West

NHS North West is looking at extending water fluoridation into more areas in Cumbria - as part of a push by the government to fluoridate more of England. Around 150,000 people in West Cumbria receive fluoridated water. Now NHS North West is consulting with the county’s primary care trust, NHS Cumbria, over whether they should draw up preliminary plans to extend its reach. The plans would be subject to a public consultation.

Barry Cockcroft, the government’s CDO, said: “Areas with high levels of caries are considering it. We only need to fluoridate 40 per cent of the country.

The main part of our policy is preventing disease and so we are looking at fluoridation. We are making progress for the first time in 20 years.”

Southampton is the first area to hold a consultation on the issue and this is already underway.

Fluoridation was first introduced into drinking water in 1960s when areas in and around Birmingham and Newcastle were fluoridated, along with the Republic of Ireland.

The government has set aside £42m over three years to strategic health authorities who decide after consultation to introduce fluoridation schemes.

Critics such as the National Pure Water Association and the Green Party are opposed to the plan and link it with diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer’s disease.

However Dr Cockcroft dismissed the ‘scare mongering’ that says it causes cancer and said: “All the water in this country contains some fluoride. So we have had it for generations and there is no evidence linking fluoride with systemic disease. The only thing that is connected with fluoridation is dental fluorosis and that only occurs in a tiny minority of children.”

The centre will include a GP mini-site, minor surgery, contraception and sexual health services and a dental walk-in centre seven days a week, before 8am and 8pm.

British patients left unprotected

The UK is in danger of being one of the last countries in the EU to persist in an outdated system that can mean dental patients who are harmed by a negligent dentist do not get any compensation, warns the Dental Defence Union.

In the large EU member states such as France and Germany, it is already a requirement that practising dentists have professional indemnity insurance in order to protect patients where they are negligently harmed.

However in the UK, while there is insurance, there is also discretionary indemnity which only occurs in a tiny minority of cases, such as when areas in and around Birminghham and Newcastle were fluoridated.

He added: “In the current volatile economic climate it is particularly important that pro-dental care professional programmes in the UK are regulated as this provides a high degree of protection. When damages are awarded in negligence cases it is imperative that patients know they will receive the compensation due to them. The UK has some of the most forward-thinking and technically advanced dental professionals in the EU but discretionary indemnity is distinctly last century.”

Smile-on offers latest in clinical dentistry

Smile-on has joined forces with Alpha Omega and is holding a conference on the very latest in clinical dentistry.

Dr Devorah Schwartz-Arad and Professor Nitza Bichacho will present success factors in dental implantation; a multi-disciplinary approach between the surgeon and the prosthodontist at next year’s Clinical Innovations Conference and Annenberg Lecture at the Royal College of Physicians. Dr Schwartz-Arad is a specialist in oral and maxillofacial surgery. Professor Bichacho is a leading professor in many fields in cross-border healthcare, including dental implant therapy and fixed prosthodontics. During this all-day event on 15 May 2009, dental professionals can explore the team’s role in treatment planning, the benefits and drawbacks of immediate implantation and loading, and how prosthodontist and surgeon can work together to determine the best treatment approach.

For more information, or to book your place at the conference, please call 020 7400 8989 or email info@smile-on.com

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Smile-on offers latest in clinical dentistry

Drop-in dental centre

First orthodontic therapists graduate

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T he first orthodontic therapeuists, a new group of dental care professionals, have just graduated from Bristol’s dental hospital.

Orthodontic Therapists are a new type of dental care professional created by the General Dental Council. They can assist patients studying under a registered specialist orthodontist trainer.

Six students have just completed the year-long programme at the University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust’s Bristol Dental Hospital.

Sarah Bain, head of dental care professional training at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust said: “I am delighted to see the first orthodontic therapists qualify. They will now make a significant impact on the number of patients accessing orthodontic care.”

This new qualification is part of a government drive to improve the speed and quality of orthodontic care. The government hopes that it will reduce waiting lists for more specialised treatments as qualified orthodontic therapists carry out routine and emergency procedures.

The Dental Care Professional Association of the UK is one of the largest providers of dental care professional programmes in the UK. Currently any qualified dental care professional is eligible to apply for the course.