Gum Disease Linked with Diabetes

Clinical guidelines recently released by the International Diabetes Foundation (IDF) emphasise the importance of periodontal health for people with diabetes, which affects about 246 million people worldwide.

World Diabetes Day (WDD) on November 14 shine a spotlight on the condition, with iconic buildings such as the London Eye, lit up with the blue WDD circle logo.

Founded by the IDF and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1991, WDD aims to raise awareness of diabetes. This year sees the first of a five-year campaign addressing the growing need for diabetes education and prevention programmes.

The new IDF oral health clinical guidelines support research which suggests that the management of periodontal disease - which affects the gums and other supporting tissues around the teeth - can help reduce the risk of a person developing diabetes and can also help those with diabetes control their blood sugar levels.

The IDF guideline contains clinical recommendations on periodontal care, written in collaboration with the World Dental Federation (FDI). These encourage health professionals look out for symptoms of periodontal disease such as swollen or red gums, or bleeding during tooth brushing and to educate patients with diabetes about the implications of the condition on oral health.

"Educating people about the risk factors of diabetes and promoting action to encourage early diagnosis, is vital in tackling the worldwide diabetes epidemic," said Sir Michael Hirst, president-elect of the IDF.

Samuel Low, associate dean and professor of periodontology at the University of Florida College of Dentistry, also emphasised prevention.

He said: "Everyone should maintain healthy teeth and gums to avoid periodontal disease, but people with diabetes should pay extra attention.

"Periodontal disease triggers the body's inflammatory responses, which can affect insulin sensitivity and ultimately lead to unhealthy blood sugar levels. Establishing routine periodontal care is one way to help keep diabetes under control."

He added: "I know that these clinical recommendations will be helpful for those professionals who work with and treat people with diabetes. I also encourage the medical and dental communities to work together to provide the best possible care for our patients."

In the UK alone, diabetic diagnosis has increased from 1.4 million in 1996, to 2.5 million in 2008. By 2025, there are predict ed to be more than four million people with diabetes in the UK. It also is estimated that there are around half a million people currently living with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes in the UK.

Viggo Mortensen is UK & Ireland vice-president of global healthcare company, Novo Nordisk, which helped sponsor WDD. He said: "As a world leader in diabetes care, we are truly committed to defeating this disease. Promoting greater awareness of the risk factors for diabetes and encouraging best-practice sharing in diabetes prevention and management is key to achieving this."

Put the dates in your diary

BDTA Dental Showcase 2010 takes place at ExCel, London, 14-16 October 2010. For further information, visit www.dental-showcase.com.
Edinburgh practice on OH mission

Edinburgh practice Stafford Street Dental Care has launched a dental health campaign by distributing 3,000 cards with top dental tips.

The brainchild of surgery owners, Yann and Gilly Maidment and their team, the campaign aims to reduce restorative treatment in the practice. The Maidments estimate that more than 100 people a year take advantage of their Relief and Rescue, package for non-registered patients who need to see a dentist urgently.

Mrs Maidment said: “When we realised how many patients we were seeing who wished they had been better informed, we decided it was time to take pre-emptive action and reach out into Edinburgh homes and workplaces to get people thinking how they could improve their dental health.”

The Scottish 2008 health survey showed that 56 per cent of adults over 65 had no teeth, with 41 per cent of Scottish adults reporting dental pain in the previous ten months. It acknowledged that Scotland’s oral health is poor compared to other European countries, exacerbated by poor diet, poverty and tobacco use.

Tips include keeping sugary snacks and drinks to mealtimes. The advice is based on the Department of Health report, Delivering Better Oral Health - the evidence-based prevention toolkit of 2007.

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The new Department of Health’s (DH) template contracts for dental access funding are ‘unnecessarily complex’, which makes them ‘risky and inappropriate for dental practice’, according to the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee. (GDPC)

The DH’s national dental access programme wants to ensure that by March 2011, anyone wanting NHS dentistry can access it in a reasonable time. Through the PCT procurement framework, the DH aims to support PCTs participating in the programme to commission NHS dental services to deliver ‘fair, robust and competitive procurements’. To this end, the DH has produced best practice guidance and template procurement documents, which will need PCTs’ input to make them appropriate for their requirements.

However, although taking up a ‘PDS Plus’ contract is not mandatory, John Milne, GDPC chairman, said dentists should exercise great caution before making a decision to do so, despite changes made by the DH.

He said: “Although it must be an individual business decision, we advise dentists to think very carefully and seek advice before taking on one of these contracts, as the dangers of breach are rife and the consequences of breach may be very damaging to practices.”

“The GDPC, advised by specialist lawyers, has spent more than four months explaining in detail to DH why its proposed contract was unsuitable, one-sided and unsafe for practitioners. “The first version, based upon a medical model, was wholly unacceptable and we advised members not to sign it. While DH has made some significant changes, we still do not feel that the contract is acceptable.”

Mr Milne added that the contract still incorporates too many controlling provisions, which could lead to intrusive micromanagement. He said: “Practices will need to devote considerable resources to managing the contract and ensuring that requirements are met. For most practices, this will require a dedicated contract manager and for the contract value to reflect the risks and extra work required.”

The final version of the ‘PDS Plus’, template agreement for dental access procurement runs to approximately 50 pages and 17 schedules.

Chief Dental Officer for England, Dr Barry Cockcroft said: “The NHS has made a commitment that everyone who wants access to NHS dentistry can get it by March 2011. To support this, PCTs have had significant increases in resources with an additional £380m of funding over the last two years taking central dental funding to a record £2,257m.

“To ensure we improve people’s access to NHS dentistry, we have developed a template agreement that PCTs can use to commission new services. The agreement will allow PCTs to count the number of new patients as well as the amount of work that dentists do, and enable them to reward dentists for the quality of the services they provide.

“This doesn’t replace the current NHS dental contract system, which is working well. But this special dental access template, will help us to move further and faster in improving access and quality of dental services.”