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 to look 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 predicted 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.”

BDTA prize winner

David Tomkins was the lucky winner of the holiday for two to the luxuri-ous Caribbean Island of Barbados.

The official Showcase prize draw, provided with compliments of the BDTA, was designed to link in with the Showcase 2009 ‘Treasures of Dentistry’ theme and was open to everyone who registered in advance for tickets to the event and attended on one or more of the exhibition days.

David is a dentist at Prescot House Dental Surgery in Mersey-side and was ‘gobsmacked’ when he received the news of his win.

Tony Reed, executive director at the BDTA, said: “Thousands of visitors entered the prize draw which proved popular with visitors. We originally developed the ‘Treasures of Dentistry’ theme to conjure up images of clear blue skies, white sandy beaches and bring a little sunshine into November at Dental Showcase. I’m sure David will experience all of this on the trip and thank you to everyone who entered the draw.”

Podcast helps dentists under investigation

Dental Defence Union (DDU) members facing a General Dental Council (GDC) investigation now have extra help on hand in the form of a newly launched podcast.

Entitled, A letter from the General Dental Council, the podcast offers practical advice for members, during what could be one of the most stressful times of their professional lives.

DDU dento-legal adviser Leo Briggs, who is interviewed on the podcast, said: “This is particularly timely, because last year, there was a 20 per cent increase in the number of complaints about dental professionals considered by the GDC at Stage 1 of, Fitness to Practise, compared to 2007.

“While only a handful of complaints will reach a, Fitness to Practise, panel, we believe that it is helpful for dental professionals in this position to have some understanding of the process and how they can give themselves the best chance, by seeking expert help from the outset from their dental defence organisation.

“The good news is that 89 per cent of complaints considered by the GDC investigating committee in 2008 - in which DDU in-house lawyers assisted members -did not proceed to a, Fitness to Practise, hearing.”

The podcast covers important advice relevant to GDC complaints and investigations. This includes calling the DDU advice line soon after receiving a letter from the GDC and acknowledging it promptly. Dentists are also advised to contact the DDU if they are asked to give comment or answer criticisms during the investigation process, as the union has an expert team of dento-legal advisers and lawyers to support and advise members throughout.

If contacted by journalists, the DDU advises dentists to contact the union first before responding to media queries.

For a copy of the podcast, log onto: www.ddu.com
Editorial comment
Cross-infection controversy - HTM 01-05

HTM 01-05 has seemingly been causing much controversy amongst the profession. Conspiracy theories abound; it’s a con perpetrated by the washer-disinfector manufacturers wanting to sell more equipment, a regulatory minefield designed to drive more dentists out of business, part of an alien invasion plot and other theories have been touted (ok, maybe I made the alien one up – Ed).

It may not be a conspiracy, but HTM 01-05 is certainly causing controversy. These latest claims by the British Dental Association of non-publishing of the evidence base for the guidelines by the Department of Health will keep the ‘he said/ she said’ argument going for some time!

Love it or loathe it, disinfection and decontamination guidelines are here to stay and dentists should do their best to be ahead of the game in terms of best practice within the limitations of their individual surgery setups.

In lighter news, dental professionals make for great marriage material! Research published in the Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology doesn’t give reasons beyond the formula used to work out the data, but I have my own theories – the uniform, unlimited access to Lidocaine, exotic CPD trips involving activities such as skiing or golf...}

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 treatments 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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Access contracts ‘risky’ claims Dental Committee

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 is of the opinion that fundamental new provisions, such as the payment mechanism, the need to comply with new key performance indicators and the ‘dental care assessment’ of patients should have been developed and piloted in conjunction with the wider profession through the implementation of the Steele review.

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.”