Fluoridation rage gains momentum

Hampshire councillors are fighting fluoridation

Southampton City councillors are backing an NHS proposal to fluoridate water in the area but Hampshire councillors are vehemently opposing it.

The proposal was backed by Southampton City councillors – 26 votes to 18 – that fluoride be added to water in some parts of Southampton and South West Hampshire, in a move that will affect 195,000 people.

Andrew Mortimore, public health director at Southampton City Primary Care Trust, said: ‘We hope that local people take confidence from the decision taken by the city council to back the proposals. We hope also that more Southampton residents will now express their support for the proposals for fluoridation currently being consulted on by South Central Strategic Health Authority.’

He added: ‘We are delighted by the fact that elected councillors who represent Southampton, which makes up the majority of those who would benefit from fluoridated water in the proposed scheme, have decided to support water fluoridation. We appreciate the thoroughness with which the issues were examined and believe this is an example of local democracy at its best.’

However, Hampshire councillors vetoed the plan, just hours after. Southampton councillors had given it their backing.

Hamphire County Council decided unanimously that it did not support the proposals.

Councillor Ken Thornber, leader of Hampshire County Council, said: ‘The Southampton City Primary Care Trust wants to improve the oral health of specific communities in Southampton, but their proposals will impact on people in south-west Hampshire which does not have the same problems of poor dental health.

There may be some benefit to some children living in the affected area, but there is also a strong possibility that children with otherwise healthy teeth may develop a degree of fluorosis.’

He expressed concerns that ‘it is not fully understood if these are other health effects to a population that has fluoride added to drinking water’.

Tony Lees, dental advisor to UK Councils Against Fluoridation (UKAF) welcomed the decision to reject the proposal and said: ‘I believe this is a stunning victory for commonsense. The council committee has been extremely thorough in its demolition of the pro water fluoridation evidence.’

Two peers, Lord Hunt and Baroness Cumberlege, have added their voices to the debate by joining with Southampton City councillors in throwing their support behind the scheme.

Lord Hunt of King’s Heath said: ‘Rightly, fluoridation is a matter for local decision following public consultation. My family and I are fortunate to live in Birmingham, where the water has been fluoridated for 45 years. From my personal experience, I would strongly commend fluoridation to the people of Southampton.’

Baroness Cumberlege claims that during more than 20 years of involvement in health issues she has seen ‘few public health measures as measurably successful as fluoridation’.

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Scottish dental access crisis

MPs are calling on the Scottish Health Secretary to deal with the lack of NHS dentists in Scotland.

Orkney, Grampian and Caithness have the lowest level of NHS dental cover, according to MSPs.

Orkney MSP Liam McArthur claims that the situation on the islands had reached crisis level.

Dental Tribune moves ‘leaps and bounds’

Dental professionals from small practices are choosing to read Dental Tribune, over any other dental publication according to a recent survey by the British Dental Trade Association (BDTA).

The Dentist Readership Survey by the BDHA, found that a total of 66 per cent of DT readers are from small practices and half of the dental professionals who read Dental Tribune (DT) say they read it regularly.

While 57 per cent of DT readers look at the news first.

More than half of DT’s readers are aged between 55 and 64.

This makes DT the second preferred choice for people in this age group.

Penny Palmer, editor of DTUK said: ‘We have only been in the market for two years and are already moving leaps and bounds compared to other stalwarts in the market that have been around for years.’

The survey found that BDHA and BDJA News are the dental publications that attract the highest number of readers.

A total of 96 per cent of dental professionals believe that dental publications enable them to keep abreast of what is happening in the dental industry. While 77 per cent read dental publications to gain information on the newest techniques.

The practice has been paying rent for nearly three years for two ‘expensively equipped’ NHS dentists rooms that are empty and unused.

When Clays Area Health Centre opened in January 2006, it included provision for an NHS dentist. However the dentist who had planned to use the facilities decided not to set up a practice in the surgery.

While Dr Ash Quraishi, principal dentist and clinical adviser at West Mountain dental practice, is even saying ‘the more the merrier’.

The message we’re putting out there is that we’re getting everyone and anyone. We are getting patients in all of the time, he said.

The practice has been established for more than 40 years and was taken over by Dr Quraishi in January.

He has already spent about £170,000 on renovating the practice – which offers NHS and private treatment – and installing new equipment. At least another £100,000 has been earmarked for further improvements.

Two new surgeries have been fitted and another is planned next year.

The waiting area and reception is to be renovated, disabled access is being improved and a centre sterilisation room created.

The practice has three dentists and a hygienist and five nurses.

The practice is open six days a week and some evenings.

Empty rooms ‘a crying shame’

St Austell MP Matthew Taylor said: ‘The doctors in Roche and myself are goshmacked that the investment has been put in for a new dentist facility but it isn’t being used.

It is clear that there is a desperate need but the PCT is now saying that it won’t fund it.

This simply suggests that NHS dentistry just isn’t being backed because everybody knows it isn’t possible to get an NHS dentist anywhere in the area, but here are rooms lying empty with all the expensive facilities ready. From the government down to the PCT there needs to be a clear determination to sort out NHS dental services and there is nowhere better to start than to fill those expensive equipped rooms.’

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT say no one can be treated in the rooms until April next year.

Fluoridation rage gains momentum

She pointed to ‘reports by the Royal College of Physicians in 1976, the University of York in 2000, the US Task Force on Community Preventive Services in 2002 and the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council in 2007 that found evidence that fluoridation reduces tooth decay.’

She added: ‘Importantly, children in fluoridated areas have fewer fillings and extractions and are less likely to need a general anaesthetic for decayed teeth to be removed. Equally important is the fact that they experience less pain, discomfort and anxiety.’

Commenting on issues posed by anti-fluoride campaigners over the safety of water fluoridation, Lord Hunt said: ‘When the debate about whether or not to fluoridate Birmingham’s water was taking place in the early 1960s, there were dire predictions from anti-fluoridation campaign groups that people would be seriously harmed, that teeth would turn brown and that no teeth would be saved from decay.

However, he claimed none of these ‘scare stories’ actually came to pass in reality.

The public consultation, on whether to add fluoride to water in parts of South Hampshire and South West Hampshire, will close on Friday 19 December. 

Credit crunch hits ADP

The credit crunch has forced the company ADP to cancel its plans to run a new NHS dental surgery in Tonbridge in Kent.

NHS West Kent, the regional primary care trust (PCT), revealed back in June that a £360,000 deal had been signed for a dental surgery have since been used by the practice for other NHS care.

He added: ‘Following this decision, the two rooms identified for a dental surgery have since been used by the practice for other NHS care.’

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However the PCT has now revealed that the company has been forced to pull out.

A spokesperson for the PCT, said it was ‘clearly disappointed’ that the company had withdrawn and that staff were doing ‘everything possible’ to help affected patients.

He added: ‘As soon as NHS West Kent became aware of this potential issue we took steps to alleviate the inconvenience that this will cause.

The PCT has temporarily awarded contracts to a range of local dentists in the short term to ensure patients have access to treatment while the formal tendering process is completed.

That process will now begin again next month and the PCT hopes a successful bidder will be selected by June next year.’