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 even 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.

Hampshire 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 there 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.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world are currently benefiting from this public health measure, which for the past 60 years has saved many millions of teeth from decay, from fillings and from needing to be extracted.'

He added: 'The degree of human discomfort and pain that has been avoided is almost in-calculable.'

Commenting on the public consultation being run by South Central Strategic Health Authority (SHA), Lord Hunt 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

MSPs 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 BDTA, found that a total of 66 per cent of DT’s 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’s readers look at the news first. More than half of DT’s readers are aged between 55 and 44.

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 BDJ and BDA 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.

Empty rooms ‘a crying shame’

Currently there are around 1,800 people, out of a total population of 20,000, on a waiting list to register for a dentist.

Nicola Sturgeon said that registration with a dentist was at record levels in the country but she admitted: ‘Some areas of the country have registration rates that are unacceptably low. NHS in the Grampian area would be included in that category. Work is ongoing to improve the rates of registration.’

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

Commenting on concerns 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 Southampon and South West Hampshire, will close on Friday 19 December.