Chewing gum could cause migraine

Dr Judith Husband, Chair of the BDA’s Education, Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee, said: “This research suggests that employment opportunities in general dental practice are not as readily available as they once were for newly-qualified practitioners. In doing so, it adds to the evidence base that must be considered as recommendations to reduce the number of places to study dentistry are contemplated.”

As the BDA has warned, these decisions must be thought about very carefully, taking into account likely changes to the way NHS dental care is delivered and safeguarding the needs of patients. But they must also be responsible to the young people who choose to invest time, money and dedication to pursuing careers in dentistry, and the taxpayers who contribute to the cost of their training.

“These are difficult decisions that must be made, implemented and monitored with great care, and in dialogue with the profession and the academic institutions they will affect. [1]”

Dolphins receive root canal treatment

Dumisa, an eight-year-old dolphin suffering from “general dental abrasion”, has just had root canal treatment, a process that lasted several hours and to which she agreed willingly, with no anaesthesia or constraints of any sort. The dental surgery took place at Ocean Park in Hong Kong and was carried out by a South African dental surgeon. The surgery was complex and required several months of preparation, with Dumisa gradually being taught to get used to the dental instruments.

Toddler dies following dental treatment

Finley Boyle, a two-year-old girl who had chronic migraine or tension headaches and chewed gum daily to quit chewing gum for one month. They had chewed gum for at least an hour up to more than six hours per day. After a month without gum, 19 of the 50 patients reported that their headaches went away entirely and seven reported a decrease in the frequency and intensity of headaches. To test the results, 26 of them agreed to resume gum chewing for two weeks. All of them reported a return of their symptoms within days.

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Woman sinks teeth into car door

A woman caused £220 worth of damage after sinking her teeth into a car.

Rhian Jeremiah, (pictured) from Cardigan, west Wales, bit into the frame above the car door following a row with three strangers, according to the Metro.

The attack happened in Aberystwyth in July last year after 26-year-old Jeremiah had been at a memorial night for her boyfriend, who had drowned off the welsh coast.

“Jeremiah approached the occupants of the Fiat at 2am after she had been drinking,” prosecutor Gerald Neave told Aberystwyth magistrates’ court.

“She became aggressive and angry but the three people in the car could not understand what she was saying and drove off. They were parked outside a takeaway restaurant called Lip Lick’n Chick’en when Jeremiah arrived and tried to wrench open the passenger door. She sank her teeth into the car’s frame between the roof and the door.”

David Folland, defending, said the incident was ‘not quite like’ the scene involving the Bond villain Jaws.

Jeremiah was given a 12-month community order and told to attend 20 alcohol abuse help sessions.

Visitors and migrants to be charged for NHS

The government has decided to go ahead with its proposals for new charges to visitors and migrants that it claims are part of its ‘clampdown on abuse of the NHS’.

GP and nurse consultations will remain free, however overseas visitors and migrants will need to pay for prescriptions. The government is also considering charging for minor surgery that is carried out by a GP and physiotherapy that has been referred through a GP.

They will also pay higher charges for services that are subsidised for patients entitled to free care, such as optical and physiotherapy that has been referred through a GP.

British Medical Association (BMA) chair Mark Porter said: “It is important that anyone accessing NHS services is entitled to do so.

“However, the government’s current proposals could create unintended drawbacks for the NHS and patients. They are likely to create a complex patchwork of charging and access entitlements where some services remain free, such as GP appointments, while others will be chargeable.”

Health Minister Lord Howe said it was important to “make sure the system is fair to the hard-working British taxpayers who fund it”.

The government will reveal more information this month and a detailed, costed implementation plan will be published in March 2014.

Glue to mend broken hearts

Researchers have developed a glue that bonds to heart tissue and could be used instead of stitches or staples.

Jeffery Karp from Harvard Medical School invented the glue, along with researchers from Children’s Hospital Boston, Brigham and Women’s Hospital and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

“With each pass of a suture needle, you have to realign the tissue,” Karp said. “Staples can damage tissue, and they need to be bent into place.” In addition, staples don’t provide a watertight seal, and are often metal, so they have to be removed, he said.

To address these problems, the researchers designed a wire-repellent polymer glue that hardens quickly and creates a seal that could withstand the stress in a beating heart or blood vessel.

Future dental implants could be made from nanotubes

A scientist at Michigan Technological University is in the process of using nanotechnology to create better, longer-lasting dental implants.

“Dental implants can greatly improve the lives of people who need them,” said Tolou Shokuhfar, an assistant professor of mechanical engineering. “But there are two main issues that concern dentists: infection and separation from the bone.”

Shokuhfar says implants with a surface made from titanium dioxide nanotubes can battle infections, improve healing, and help dental implants last a lifetime.

“We have done toxicity tests on the nanotubes, and not only did they not kill cells, they encouraged growth,” she said. She has already demonstrated that bone cells grow more vigorously and adhere better to titanium coated with titanium dioxide nanotubes than to conventional titanium surfaces.

The nanotubes can also be a drug delivery system. Shokuhfar’s team loaded titanium dioxide nanotubes with the anti-inflammato-ry drug sodium naproxen and demonstrated that it could be released after implant surgery. That assures that the medicine gets where it’s needed, and it reduces the chances of unpleasant side effects that arise when a drug is injected or taken orally. To fight infection, the nanotubes can also be laced with silver nanoparticles.

Shokuhfar and her team have received a provisional patent and are working with two hospitals to develop the technology and license it.

DPAS appoints new Commercial Director

Dean Hallows has been appointed the new Commercial Director of DPAS, which administers practice-branded dental plans for practices and patients.

Quentin Skinner, Chairman and founder of DPAS, said: “As we continue to offer a range of services supporting the growth of dental practices and with a new NHS contract imminent, we firmly believe that now is the time to invest in the future and that of the practices with which we work in order to meet and exceed the needs of both dentists and patients.”

Den has over 25 years’ business experience within the dental market, most recently representing Dentsply.

Dean said: “I am very much looking forward to working closely with the team and getting more involved with dental practices across the UK. DPAS has an excellent reputation and, with the dental market about to change, I am positive that we are very well placed to support our customers through any transition.”

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Editorial comment

Hello and welcome to the first issue of Dental Tribune UK in 2014!

I hope you had a relaxing break over the festive period and have returned to work bursting with enthusiasm and vigour! No? Just me then!

All joking aside January is a great month to take stock of where you are and focus your energies activities that can make a positive difference.

January has already shaped up to be a tumultuous time in dentistry, with the telling lack of mentions in the New Year’s Honours and Awards list for the dental profession; and NHS dental provision thrust into the limelight by an open letter to the Daily Telegraph and subsequent discussions on national breakfast television and online forums across the country about the adequacy of NHS dental provision and whether it is fit for purpose.

I have a feeling this is a subject that will not be going away very soon. Hang on to your hats!

At Dental Tribune UK, we are also taking stock and have lots of new ideas in development. As always, we value readers’ input and are always happy to receive feedback and suggestions, articles and case studies. Get in touch – lisa@healthcare-learning.com.

PHE supports plain tobacco packaging

In a submission to the independent review into standardised tobacco packaging, Public Health England (PHE) says it believes there is ‘substantial and compelling evidence’ that it will be an effective measure to tackle smoking.

The Independent Review into standardised packaging of tobacco was established by the Secretary of State for Health in November 2013, to report by March 2014. On 16 December 2013 the review published a method statement and invited research-based evidence.

In PHE’s response, it argues that recent literature reviews show that standardised packaging reduces the attractiveness of cigarettes, increases the importance of health messages and increases people’s intention to quit. The evidence also indicates that young people are markedly affected by standardised packaging and will be less likely to buy the product.

Professor Kevin Fenton, PHE’s director of health and wellbeing said: “With nearly one in five adults still smoking, most of whom started as children, smoking remains the top cause of premature mortality in England. In tackling this challenge, it is vital to develop strategies based on the evidence of what works.

“Public Health England is convinced that standardised packaging is a crucial component of our broader efforts to reduce the incidence and prevalence of smoking, improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and reduce premature mortality.”

A 87-year-old woman in Croatia grew two new teeth after being struck by lightning when she was 85.

A dentist told Stana Matkovic that the teeth were there but had never erupted, and speculated that stress could be the reason why they have now come out.

Matkovic then revealed to her dentist that a lightning strike had hit her two years ago and she ended up in hospital.

PHE supports plain tobacco packaging

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Woman grows two new teeth after lightning strike
Advanced radiation therapy better for head and neck cancer

An advanced form of radiation therapy may be better for patients with head and neck cancer than standard radiation therapy, according to an analysis published in the journal *Cancer*.

The study establishes so-called intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) as both a safe and beneficial treatment for patients with head and neck cancer.

Radiation can cause significant side effects including dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, and bone destruction. Research has shown that IMRT, an advanced radiation technique that is designed to treat tumours while sparing normal tissues, can cause less dry mouth and dental problems than traditional radiation.

Beth Beadle, from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, and her colleagues analysed a large database of patients treated for head and neck cancer at various clinics across the United States.

They found that 84.1 per cent of the patients treated with IMRT had not died from cancer, compared with 66 per cent of patients treated with traditional radiation. Furthermore, all subgroups of patients treated with IMRT had better survival than those treated with traditional radiation.

“This analysis revealed that patients treated with IMRT have less cancer-related deaths than those with traditional techniques. So, not only do they have fewer side effects, but they also have fewer life-threatening recurrences,” said Dr Beadle.

Lidl bans sweets from checkouts

Lidl has banned sweets and chocolate from checkouts at all 600 of its UK stores.

The racks of sweets have now been replaced with dried and fresh fruit, oatcakes and juices, following a trial at the supermarket last year. During the trial, Lidl found that the turnover of the healthy tills was 100 per cent higher than that of the standard tills, with customers responding positively to their arrival in store.

In a survey, Lidl found that seven out of 10 customers would prefer a sweet-free checkout, while 68 per cent of parents were worried about their children for chocolate at the checkout, with 66 per cent of parents giving in.

Ronny Gottschlich, managing director, Lidl UK, said: “We know how difficult it can be to say no to pestering power, so by removing sweets and chocolates from our tills we can make it easier for parents to reward children in healthier ways.”

Malcolm Clark, co-ordinator of the Children’s Food Campaign, said: “We congratulate Lidl for making this move and leading the way on removing unhealthy snacks from checkouts. The onus is now on other supermarkets and retailers to follow suit, and we and the British Dietetic Association will keep up the pressure for them to do so.”

New campaign highlights toxic effect of smoking

Public Health England has launched a new Smokefree Health Harms campaign highlighting the impact and serious damage that smoking causes the body.

The new campaign, supported by TV advertising, brings to life the toxic cycle of dirty blood and into the bloodstream, finally destroying major organs. The chemicals are then excreted by the kidneys and into the bloodstream, finally damaging cells in the brain.

The new campaign went live as of 30 December 2013 with support and advice available for anyone looking to stop smoking. Anyone looking to quit can visit the smokefree website.

Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies, said: “We know about the serious effect smoking has on the heart and lungs but smokers need to be aware of how much potential damage is being done to the brain and other vital organs through toxins in cigarettes entering the bloodstream.

“Smoking is the major cause of premature death, with one in two smokers dying prematurely from smoking related diseases, and it is extremely worrying that people still underestimate the health harms associated with it.

“However, it is not all doom and gloom for smokers looking to quit this New Year. Within five years of stopping smoking, your risk of stroke can be reduced to the same as a lifetime non-smoker.”

Campaigners crack down on sugar in food

A new campaign group has been formed to try and reduce the amount of sugar added to food and soft drinks.

Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), which has pushed for cuts to salt intake since the 1990s, has set up Action on Sugar to help people avoid ‘hidden sugars’ and get manufacturers to reduce the ingredient over time.

According to the BBC, Action on Sugar will set targets for the food industry to add less sugar bit by bit so consumers don’t notice the difference.

Action on Sugar chairman Graham MacGregor said: “We must now tackle the obesity epidemic both in the UK and worldwide.

“This is a simple plan which gives a level playing field to the food industry, and must be adopted by the Department of Health to reduce the completely unnecessary and very large amounts of sugar in the food and soft drink industry is currently adding to our foods.”

Associate Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, Mike Knatton, said: “We need energy to keep us going through the day. But sugars added to foods like fizzy drinks and biscuits contribute to our daily calorie intake without giving us any other nutritional value.

“If manufacturers made small changes to the products we eat everyday it could make a difference to our waistlines. It would need to be combined with other measures to fully address the problem of obesity, but it’s a step in the right direction.”