Combat dental anxiety in children

By DTI

SHEFFIELD, UK: For sufferers of dental anxiety, the fear of dental procedures and check-ups can often lead to neglect of oral care, poorer dental health, and a sense of depression or shame. A new study conducted by researchers at the University of Sheffield has looked into the efficacy of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as a means of addressing dental anxiety in children, over one-third of whom experience such fear, and achieved good results.

In the study, the researchers aimed to develop a guided self-help CBT resource to reduce dental anxiety in children. This fear can prevent children from receiving important dental care, so understanding the root of the issue is an important step in seeking to address the problem. Interestingly, research recently conducted in the US has found that dental anxiety may not only be caused by environmental factors, but also be a result of genetic influences. Irrespective of the aetiology, reducing the fear of dental visits in children is a valuable corrective action that can ideally lead to lifelong healthy dental habits.

In the first phase of the study, a qualitative approach was utilised to guide the development of the resource. The second phase involved children between the ages of 9 and 16 who suffered from dental anxiety being asked to trial the CBT resource. Available in hard copy or online, the CBT resource allowed a variety of techniques and tools to be employed by the children. These included squeezing a stress ball, writing a message to the dentist and choosing a small reward. The children’s relative levels of dental anxiety were assessed through the completion of questionnaires prior to and after using the resource.

In addition, the feasibility of this resource for children was analysed through a combination of interviews and focus groups with children, parents and carers, as well as dental professionals. The researchers found that the use of the CBT resource resulted in 60 per cent of the children feeling less worried about visiting the dentist. Additionally, the participating children were found to have a corresponding increase in health-related quality of life after their use of the CBT resource.

The study findings will be employed in the development of a more definitive trial to investigate the treatment success and cost-effectiveness of this resource.

The study, titled “Development and testing of a cognitive behavioural therapy resource for children’s dental anxiety”, was published online on 1 November in JDR Clinical and Translational Research.

New Exeter dental education facility

By DTI

EXETER, UK: Replacing an old dental training facility at Heathrive Hospital, the new Dental Education Facility opened last week in Exeter. In addition to the training of Plymouth University students in the five-year dental and three-year dental therapy and hygiene undergraduate programmes, it will offer basic dental procedures, like filling, extraction and root canal therapy as well as periodontal treatment, for local NHS patients.

The facility in Exeter will be run and managed by the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise, a non-profit organisation that aims to improve oral health across the South West.

With a capacity upgrade, it will offer 42 chairs, as well as a 16-chair Simulated Dental Learning Environment, where students can test and improve their clinical skills on smart dummies.

According to university officials, it will also provide a suite of postgraduate programmes, allowing dentists and other dental health professionals from the area to further their careers through education.

The opening was attended by Chief Dental Officer for England Dr Sara Hurley, who said that the facility is the spirit of best practice in care, learning and social enterprise. “Recognising a need to improve access, the Exeter Dental Education Facility offers not only a place for excellent patient care but an outstanding environment for the high quality of training of the next generation of dental professionals,” she said.

Exeter Member of Parliament Ben Bradshaw added: “It was great to see the students learning in such state of the art facilities and the local patients benefiting from their care. The dental school has been a valuable asset for Exeter in recent years and it is wonderful to see it in such a fantastic, brand new setting.”

The dental training facility in Exeter originally opened in 2008 and has provided NHS dental care by students under supervision of qualified dental professionals to more than 18,000 people across Devon and Cornwall, according to Peninsula figures. There are currently four dental education facilities run by the organisation in the South West, with the other three based in Plymouth and Truro.
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Society for Women in Dentistry launched

By DTI

LONDON, UK: It is estimated that by 2020 over half of dentists in the UK will be women. In order to address particular challenges related to the feminisation of the workforce, as well as to encourage and inspire women to achieve their full potential in the field now and in the future, the Society for Women in Dentistry was officially launched this month.

The introduction event in London saw presentations by outgoing Executive Dean of King’s College London Dental Institute Prof. Dianne Bekow, British Dental Association executive member Dr Alison Lockyer, and General Dental Council adviser and practice owner Dr Sana Movahedi, each of them speaking about their own careers in dentistry and the current issues women in the field face.

Open to dental students and professionals across all universities, the society will be welcoming both women and men to join and support them in their endeavour to recognise future stars in dentistry and foster them in their specialities, in which successful individuals in their profession will describe their own career pathways, the society plans to hold regular networking events for undergraduates to meet each other and create contacts with fellow students, graduate dentists and working professionals.

It also announced plans to hold an event in March next year, coinciding with International Women’s Day, to raise the profile and celebrate the contributions of women in dentistry.

Despite their increasing numbers in the workforce, female dental professionals are still under-represented in most of the key specialties, except dental public health, paediatric dentistry, special care dentistry and oral microbiology. Moreover, women professionals are less involved in leadership; according to the society, preventing them from influencing decisions made at higher levels.

New perspectives at Belfast Oral Health Conference

By DTI

BELFAST, UK: Under the theme of ‘Perspectives’, members of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) recently met at Belfast Waterfront convention centre to discuss how oral health issues affect overall health. One of the largest gatherings of dental care providers in the UK, this year’s Oral Health Conference aimed to look beyond the mouth in order to gain fresh perspectives on the wider impact of the dental profession.

Introduced by four chief dental officers this morning, the programme started off with papers on peri-implantitis, presented by Liverpool dentist Dr Ian Dunn, and new concepts in the association between oral disease and systemic disease, discussed by hygienist Juliette Reeves. Over the course of the 18–19 November, the role of dental hygienists and therapists in oral and maxillofacial surgery practice, radiation protection and stress management, among other topics, was also in focus. Participants were be able to gain valuable continuing professional development points by attending the lectures and hands-on sessions.

The congress was supported by a number of major industry competitors, including Colgate-Palmolive, CURAPROX, Dentsply Sirona and GC. Over 300 members attended the lectures and hands-on sessions.

As the winner, Virdee took home an X-Smart IQ WaveOne Gold starter kit with dual cordless motor and an iPad mini from Dentsply Sirona.

"His was the most technically challenging case," explained Dr Julian Webber, dentist at the Harley Street Centre for Endodontics in London and founder of the award. "The tooth had been treated before, but poorly, and the canals were curved with apices close to the maxillary sinus.”

"This was the kind of case for which a specialist referral would normally be warranted," he added.

Webber and his co-judges, Dr Trevor Lamb, another London-based endodontic specialist, and Pro-Vice-Provost at University College London Prof Andrew Tider, selected the winning entries from dozens of contributions submitted by dentists from all over the UK during the last six months. Deciding who should take the first three places was very challenging owing to the high quality of the treatment, according to them.

"As we looked through these entries, supported by extensive references and a highly rigorous approach, from diagnosis and presentation of options to the shaping, cleaning and obturation of canals, at every stage using the correct technique, we had to keep reminding ourselves that these young dentists were effectively still in training. They are rising stars in the field of endodontics and a credit to their teaching hospitals and tutors," Webber said.

This year marked the fifth time that the award was given to young professionals in the field of endodontics. Those who would like to compete will have their chance when the next competition begins later this year. Further details will be announced through the British Endodontic Society website.