**White at the End of the Tunnel**

Trading Standards Essex ‘support’ in-surgery tooth whitening; CDO announces regulation amendment proposals to be sent to EU Parliament

The confusion surrounding the issue of tooth whitening could be nearing an end as situations both at home and in Europe see major developments.

In a meeting of the British Dental Bleaching Society, Dental Directory’s Sales and Marketing Director Mike Volk read out part of a letter received from Essex Trading Standards by the company over the issue of supplying tooth bleaching products (Dental Tribune Vol 5, No. 15 pg 10):

“...as outlined during our conversation on Friday, this Service has no issue with peroxide-based whiteners > 0.1% supplied to GDC registered dentists for use in the course of a professional whitening service conducted by a registrant. It is the view of this Service that such treatments would be regulated by the GDC. Provided your business takes necessary raw materials and whitening kits to make this possible.”

In view of this statement, Dental Directory has announced that it has reinstated the sale of chairside whitening kits with immediate effect. Mr Volk stated: “I would like to think that as a result of our campaign, at last common sense has prevailed and Trading Standards action. As one report stated, for AstraZeneca, this change reinforces its role as a ‘pure play’ pharmaceutical company at a time when many rivals are diversifying.”

**Ótzi the Iceman**

20 years ago Otzi the Iceman, the 5,300-year-old mummy, was discovered encased in ice in the Italian Alps; but even though he had a full set of teeth reports said that they were in bad shape. Recently at the World Congress on Mummys Studies in San Diego new findings from CT scans were presented revealing that the man suffered from advanced alveolar bone loss of his teeth, “proving” carious lesions, and periodontitis. The severity of the mummy’s carious lesions surprised the researchers, and they have suggested that the condition is evidence of a change in the Neolithic diet. DNA testing of the mummy’s oral cavity is being planned.

**Dentsply buys Astra Tech**

According to a report from Reuters, U.S. company Dentsply International has brought AstraZeneca’s dental implants and medical devices unit to the States for $8.4 billion, securing themselves another section of the dental market. Dentsply’s revenue will now increase by approximately a quarter after that of off-bids from rival private equity firms and medical technology groups, strengthening its position in the dental market. Last year the Swedish-based company AstraTech had a revenue of $555 million, ranking itself as the world’s third-largest dental implants maker after Straumann and Nobel Biocare. As one report stated, for AstraZeneca, this change reinforces its role as a “pure play” pharmaceutical company at a time when many rivals are diversifying.

**Number of patients seen by NHS dentists increases**

According to a new quarterly report looking into NHS dental activity, almost one million more patients were seen and given a dental examination in the last two years—967,000 more than the baseline figure in March 2006. The figures show that 56.2 per cent of the population is seen by an NHS dentist, exceeding the standard level of 55.8 per cent for the very first time. The report also revealed a 100,000 decrease on the previous year in Courses of Treatment (CoTs) with an estimated 9.4 million in the last quarter; the largest decrease was seen in North East, which saw a provisional drop of over five per cent.

**Contamination threat Dental bills create risk for patients**

At European level, plans are in motion to put proposals forward to amend the regulations surrounding tooth whitening in the European Parliament.

According to Chief Dental Officer for England Dr Barry Cockcroft, there has been a meeting between the Department of Health, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to look at the situation. This has initiated ‘internal procedures’ to write a proposal to amend the regulations at EU level. According to Dr Cockcroft, this is ‘an opportuni tye to sort this situation out properly in Europe.’

The timelines for this are short; the proposal is due to be published in a few weeks before going to the European Commission for progression to the European Parliament. Unlike previous unsuccessful attempts to change the law by going through the Cosmetics Directive, this approach is seen to be more favourable as there is support in the Commission for amendments to the regulations.