Clearance for HIV positive healthcare workers

The Department of Health has announced a system of health clearance for healthcare workers living with HIV whose disease is adequately controlled, so that they are able to return to their chosen profession.

In August 2015, Chief Medical Officer Sally Davies announced that healthcare workers who are HIV-positive will be able to return to practice, and now the Department of Health announced a system of health clearance, setting those wheels in motion.

In January 2011 the DoH said that it was reviewing its policy on the prevention of HIV-positive surgeons and dentists exceptional case, the likes of which we have not seen before or since.’

The regulations were brought in after the publicity associated with the death of an American dental patient in 1990, one of six patients believed to have been infected with HIV in an unresolved Florida case. Regulatory bodies in most countries responded to the case differently – the virus load; and are regularly monitored by their treating and occupational health physicians.

Those with HIV wishing to perform exposure-prone procedures will need to be registered on a confidential national register, the UKAP-OHR. An interim paper-based version is being made available to allow healthcare workers to register, whilst the web-based version is in development and will be made available in April 2014.

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from carrying out ‘exposure-prone procedures’, and now the day has come for the UK to fall in line with most other Western countries, and give these healthcare workers their careers back.

As Kevin Lewis, Dental Director of Dental Protection put it: “After decades of living in fear and dealing with prejudice, dentists can finally return to their professional calling, although regrettably it is too late for some to do so. Patient safety should be at the forefront of healthcare, but the original rules were introduced as a reaction to a mysterious and unexplained case, the likes of which we have not seen before or since.”

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New BDIA marketing campaign launched

Dental nurse stuck off following ‘number of convictions’

Hundreds of students without foundation training place

E-cigarettes banned for under-18s
Editorial comment

Welcome to this month’s edition of Dental Tribune UK.

Now we are settled into the new year (unless you just celebrated Chinese New Year, in which case Kung Hei Fat Choi) I hope all those resolutions you made are working well for you and your practice.

This month the news is about the establishment of a workable system to allow HIV positive healthcare workers to return to work.

Providing a certain criteria is met, healthcare workers – including dental professionals – with HIV will be allowed to work with patients, even where it is considered an exposure prone procedure (in which dentistry often falls).

This is fabulous news – for too long healthcare workers have either been stigmatised or forced to lie (or worse, live in ignorance) because the rules governing their working status have been left behind by infection control procedures and advances in medicines.

Now people who have already had such a life-changing event such as an HIV diagnosis do not have to face losing their working status and livelihood too.

Let us support colleagues who need it to get back to work and caring for patients where they belong.

Fluoridated water does not increase bone cancer risk

Fluoride levels in drinking water do not lead to a greater risk of primary bone cancer, a new study has found.

Researchers at Newcastle University found that higher levels of natural or artificial fluoride in drinking water in the UK had no impact on the incidence of either osteosarcoma or Ewing’s sarcoma in people 0-49.

Dr Richard McNally of the Institute of Health & Society at Newcastle University led the study. He said: “This is the largest study that has ever been conducted examining the possible association between fluoride in drinking water and risk of osteosarcoma or Ewing sarcoma.

“Karen Blakey used sophisticated software to link together data on the geographical distributions of bone cancer incidence and fluoride levels. Statistical modelling of these data showed that there was no evidence of an association.”

Andy Hall, chairman of Bone Cancer Research Trust’s (BCRT) Independent Scientific Advisory Committee, said: “Bone cancer is diagnosed in about 500 patients every year in the UK and Ireland, many of whom are children. However, at present, very little is known of the factors which trigger the disease.

“The study funded by the Bone Cancer Research Trust and reported by the team in Newcastle provides very important reassurance to patients and their relatives that fluoride is not involved in this process and shows that more research is needed to find out how this potentially devastating form of cancer can be prevented.”

Fluoridated water has no impact on incidence of bone cancer

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”I am convinced by GrandioSO’s similarity to natural teeth!“

Dr. H. Gräber
Fukushima children’s teeth to be checked for radiation impact

The Fukushima Prefecture Dental Association will spearhead efforts to determine whether children’s teeth contain the radioactive isotope strontium-90 following the meltdown from the Fukushima nuclear plant in 2011, according to the Japan Times.

Similar to calcium, strontium-90 tends to be absorbed by the bones and teeth once it enters the body. It is widely believed to cause bone cancer and leukaemia, and cannot be detected by whole body radiation counters.

The teeth of children aged five to 15 will be checked if extracted during regular dental visits, and the research will start by examining the teeth for cesium or other isotopes. For the other teeth, checks for radioactive isotopes will be carried out in groups of ten, rather than on individual teeth.

The education ministry released readings for strontium detected in the Fukushima area in September 2011 that said the amount present in soil was less than a hundredth of the cesium present.

Noboru Takamura from Nagasaki University said: “Based on past radiation data, any detected amount would be extremely small. If that is proved by the research, people will feel relief. I want the researchers to take the time to explain the results to the children whose teeth will be examined.”

Learn how to save a life at the Dentistry Show

The Mouth Cancer Foundation will be at stand F57 at this year’s Dentistry Show, where delegates can learn how to save in life in just two minutes.

Dental practices in the UK should be performing thorough mouth cancer checks on their patients. This quick detailed examination takes just two minutes, yet very few patients are aware they should receive this at least once a year and it is suspected that some dental practices are still not doing it.

The charity’s Mouth Cancer Screening Accreditation Scheme is raising awareness amongst both patients and dental practices by calling every dental practice in the UK to be carrying out a thorough head and neck examination as part of regular check-ups.

The scheme is a ‘Two minutes to save a life’ screening protocol that every dentist should be able to include in their routine examinations in order to increase early detection rates and save lives.

The scheme is open to any dentist registered with the GDC or any dental practice whose clinicians are registered with the GDC. For more information, email info@mouthcancerfoundation.org or call 01924 950 950.

Leicester MP calls for sugar ban in schools

Leicester MP Keith Vaz is campaigning for sugary drinks to be banned in all schools in the city, according to the Leicester Mercury.

Mr Vaz said: “For too long, food and drink manufacturers have misled parents about the amount of sugar added to their products. These hidden calories are contributing to an epidemic of childhood obesity.”

He has written a letter to the Leicester’s education cabinet member, councillor Vi Dempster, urging the education authority to ban sugar from school’s canteens and vending machines.

Valence Primary School in Dagenham banned fruit juice, and Mr Vaz wants to follow this example.

Councillor Dempster said: “All of our menus are devised with the help of a dietician – all of our recipes meet Government guidelines.

“Over the past few years, our menus have been reviewed to reduce the amount of sugar that’s used. Given the levels of childhood obesity in the city, I absolutely support the points Keith Vaz raises about sugar.”

Lords backs ban on smoking in cars with children

The House of Lords has backed a Labour plan to ban smoking in cars carrying children, despite opposition from the government.

According to the BBC, government backbenchers will not be pressed to reverse the change in the Commons. Instead, they will have a free vote on the amendment when the bill returns from the Lords.

The amendment to the Children and Families Bill was brought forward by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Lord Faulkner and Baroness Hughes.

Lord Hunt said: “I was very surprised by research that has been identified by the British Lung Foundation, which shows that a single cigarette smoked in a moving car with a window half open exposes a child in the centre of a back seat to around two-thirds as much second-hand smoke as in an average smoke-filled pub of days gone by.”

This level increased to 11 times when the car was not moving with the windows closed.

Conservative peer Lord Cormack argued that any law which “brings the state into the private space of individuals should be deplored”.

However, Lord Hunt said: “There are more important principles than that. One for me is the need for child protection. Unlike most adults, children lack the freedom to decide when and how they travel, they lack the authority most adults have to ask people not to smoke in their company.”

Director of pro-smoking group Forest, Simon Clark, said: “Legislation is completely unnecessary. Most adult smokers accept that smoking in a car with children present is inconsiderate and the overwhelming majority choose not to. Education, not legislation, is the way forward.”
Two of the UK’s most respected education and academic organisations have joined forces to provide an innovative, technology driven MSc in Restorative and Aesthetic Dentistry. Healthcare Learning Smile-on, the UK’s pre-eminent healthcare education provider and the University of Manchester, one of the top twenty-five universities in the world, have had the prescience to collaborate in providing students with the best of everything – lecturers, online technology, live sessions and support.

The programme is designed to encourage the student to take responsibility for his/her own learning. The emphasis is on a self-directed learning approach.

The majority of the learning resources on this programme will be online. The masters will combine interactive distance learning, webinars, live learning and print.

Students will be able to communicate with a diverse multi-ethnic global community of peers, with who they will also share residential get-togethers in fantastic settings around the world.

This innovative programme establishes the academic and clinical parameters and standards for restorative and aesthetic dentistry. Students will leave with a world recognised MSc.

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Blackpool defers decision on fluoridated milk

Blackpool councillors have deferred their plans to introduce milk containing fluoride into local primary schools, according to the Blackpool Gazette.

The council met on 27 January 2014 to make a decision on whether school children should have fluoridated milk, but decided to hold off introducing it.

Blackpool’s director of public health, Dr Arif Rajpura, said: “We have decided to defer the decision on fluoridated milk.

“A study which took place in Newcastle showed slightly higher levels of fluoride than expected in children who used the milk. Public Health England has asked that any local authority considering a decision on using fluoridated milk to await the findings of its study.

“The information was only provided to us today [27 January] and we will look at the findings and make a decision on fluoridated milk in the coming weeks when we have a chance to review it.”

If the council goes ahead with the plans, parents will be given the chance to opt out of the scheme.

Councillor Sarah Riding, cabinet member for health, said: “The issue for us is that unfortunately children’s teeth in Blackpool are some of the worst in the country.

“Introducing fluoride would not be something that happens in isolation – we would continue with all our initiatives in schools around brushing teeth.”

Paediatricians should manage dental trauma, says report

Non-dentists can play a key role in preventing and treating dental trauma, according to a new report by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In guidelines published in Pediatrics, the academy lays out the basics of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for injured teeth.

In children six years of age and younger, oral injuries are the second most common injury, writes Martha Ann Keels, chief of pediatric dentistry at Duke University, and her colleagues. Anyone who sees children in urgent care settings needs to be prepared to treat dental trauma because often no dentist is available and time may be of the essence.

The authors write that physicians who care for children should try to prevent injuries to their patients’ teeth by recommending safety measures. They should also tell their patients to wear mouth guards during sports.

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