Wales may ban e-cigarette use in public places

Wales could be the first part of the UK to ban the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed public places, due to a concern that the devices normalise smoking and undermine the smoking ban.

Health Minister Mark Drakeford said: “I have concerns about the impact of e-cigarettes on the enforcement of Wales’ smoking ban. That’s why we are proposing restricting their use in enclosed public places.

“I am also concerned that their use in enclosed public places could normalise smoking behaviour. E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive, and I want to minimise the risk of a new generation becoming addicted to this drug.”

This comes as new research has found that e-cigarette use among adolescents is associated with cigarette smoking.

The study, carried out by researchers at the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, found that e-cigarette use among adolescents in the US doubled from 5.3 per cent in 2011 to 6.8 per cent in 2012. They also found that those who used e-cigarettes were more likely to progress to traditional cigarettes and become regular smokers.

These results call into question e-cigarette advertisers’ claims that they are effective smoking cessation devices.

Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, said: “When the Foundation questioned more than 2,000 people about safe alternatives to smoking, more than half (57 per cent) thought e-cigarettes fell into this category. This research shows they appear to be acting as a gateway for teenagers to take up smoking.

“The results of the study certainly suggest there is plenty of room for improvement when it comes to getting young adults to kick the habit. Factors such as social economy, education, and health information they are often given. E-cigarettes are being marketed as an attractive, appealing alternative, and I urge the Government to intervene and ensure this is stopped immediately.”

However Richard Filbrandt, e-cigarette user and co-owner of the Vibrant Vapour cafe in Camarthen, said they had studies showing there was no risk to passive smokers.

He told the BBC: “There are studies done by Air for Change in America that say it doesn’t warrant withdrawing them from public places, and they are the same people that said take cigarettes away from public places.

“Why should we be treated like smokers? Why should we be put out at risk of passive smoking ourselves in a smoking area when we do not smoke?”

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Sugar costs NHS £1.25bn each year

The National Health Service is spending £1.25 billion each year on sugar-damaged mouths, according to the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC).

According to a blog on the Teethwise website (www.teethwise.co.uk), this accounts for 53 per cent of its annual budget, and does not include the cost of obesity, diabetes and other health complications caused by the consumption of excess amounts of sugar.

Periodontist Dr Rana Al-Falaki said: “Sugar leads to tooth decay – fixing which requires fissure sealants, simple fillings, root canal treatments, and in some cases extractions. With this in mind, we estimate that sugar costs the government at least over £1.25bn in outpatient (dental) fees annu- ally alone, and that’s only if you’re considering the direct effect of sugar on the dental care budget and ignoring the NHS costs on diabetes and heart disease.

“Sugar also leads to plaque build-up, which is the main factor in the aetiology of periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is the major cause of tooth loss, and has strong links to diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. Of course diabetes and sugar have their own direct connections, but oral health is a known contribu- tor too.”

IDH acquires The Dental Directory

Supply business The Dental Directory has been bought by Integrated Dental Holdings (IDH), one of Britain’s corporate dental services providers.

Terry Scicluna, Chief Executive of IDH said: “Dental Directory is a well-established business delivering clear benefits to its customers and suppliers. The existing management team, which will continue to lead the business, has done a great job of delivering strong business performance and customer service.

“As part of the Dental Buying Group (DBG), we will have a comprehensive integrated consumables and service support structure in the UK for dental practices. We look forward to building on this in the future and further improving the quality of service provided to both Dental Directory and DBG businesses’ customers and members.”

The Dental Directory’s Managing Director Martin Mills said: “We are delighted to be partner- ing with IDH. They strongly support our strategy to continue to grow and diversify Dental Directory’s services and support to our customers. The prospect of greater co-operation with IDH, which operates one of the largest dental healthcare practice networks in the UK with over 600 practices, and with DBG, will significantly add to our ability to provide a superior, cost effective service to customers.”

Low vit D during pregnancy linked to caries in toddlers

Low vitamin D levels in women during pregnancy lead to a higher risk of cavities in their toddlers, new research has found.

According to Reuters, researchers from University of Manitoba’s dental school in Win- nipeg measured vitamin D levels in second or early third trimester in 207 pregnant women and then examined the teeth of 15% of their children when they were an average of 16 months old.

In the study, published in Pediatrics, the researchers found that prenatal vitamin D levels were significantly lower in women whose toddlers later had cavities than in women whose toddlers did not have cavities.

The researchers said: “Prevention efforts should begin dur- ing pregnancy by bolstering maternal nutrition, either through improved dietary intake or sup-plementation with vitamin D.”

Dentistry ‘under attack’ - BDA

Dentistry is under at- tack from govern- ments, regulators and the fearfulness of politicians, Chair of the British Dental Association’s (BDA) Principal Executive Committee (PEC) Dr Mick Armstrong stated.

Dr Armstrong also stated that the profession could be proud of the way it continu- ally rises to the challenge and reasserts its professionalism when it does fall short.
BDA launches petition over DFT salary cuts

The British Dental Association (BDA) has launched a petition to oppose a proposal to reduce the salary paid to Dental Foundation Trainees in England. NHS England is proposing a cut of nearly eight per cent to the salary which would see those beginning DFT in September 2014 would be paid £28,076, more than £2,000 less than those currently completing their DFT year.

The BDA believes that this is an ‘attack on the youngest and most vulnerable members of the profession’, and argues that dental students are graduating with increasing levels of debt so are already facing challenges to manage their finances and launch their careers.

At the time of going to press, the e-petition had 4,168 signatures. It can be viewed at petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/64208.

Incorporated dental practices challenged by HMRC

A growing number of dentists who have incorporated their dental practices are being challenged by HM Revenue and Customs to defend both the valuation and the process by which the practice assets were transferred to the new limited company, recent figures by NASDAL reveal.

Accountant Alan Suggett, a member of NASDAL’s technical committee, said: “The goodwill transferred to the limited company can be treated as taxable remuneration. This creates a liability for income tax at 45 per cent and National Insurance at 15.8 per cent.

“In the case of an NHS in-
corporation, where the con-tract remains in the name of the dentist, this could apply to the whole goodwill value. How many practice owners could afford to write out a cheque to HMRC for 59 per cent of their goodwill?”

This issue is of particular concern to NASDAL lawyers who sell practices which were incorporated without the ben-fit of specialist advice. In many instances NHS practices have been ‘incorporated’ leaving the contract in the name of the dentist, which throws up significant problems when the practice owner wants to sell the company, NASDAL says.

In addition to tax and NIC, other problems that re-sult from flawed incorporations can include breaching the NHS contract and exclu-sion from the NHS pension scheme.

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Alasdair Miller named next BDA President

Dr. Alasdair Miller will take on the role of President of the British Dental Association (BDA) from 10 April 2014. He will be the BDA’s 128th President, succeeding Dr. Barry McConigle.

For more than 20 years Dr. Miller was a partner in a mainly NHS dental practice in Taunton. From 1997 to 2013 he was the Regional Postgraduate Dean at the University of Bristol where he was also Programme Director for the University’s Open Learning for Dentists Diploma programme. In 2009 he was the first dentist to become Fellow of the Academy of Medical Educators.

From 2007 to 2010 he was a consultant to the Peninsula Dental School. He currently sits on the Council of the MUD and is the interim Chair of the Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset and South Gloucestershire Dental Local Professional Network.

Dr. Miller served on the BDA’s Representative Body from 1986 to 2012. He also been an active member of the BDA’s Education Committee for ten years and served on a variety of task groups and advisory boards within the dental education and training arena.

Dr. Miller said: “It is an honour to be taking up the Presidency of the Association and I look forward to acting as an ambassador for the profession in what are challenging times for it. During my year as President I will champion the profession and its commitment to maintaining the highest standards of patient care and professional excellence.”

Binge drinking prolongs wound recovery time

People who are injured while binge drinking are much slower to heal from wounds, researchers from Loyola University have found.

In the United States, alcohol dependence and/or abuse affects 20 per cent to 40 per cent of hospitalised patients. Patients with surgical site infections are hospitalised for twice as long, have a higher rate of re-admission and are twice as likely to die as patients who did not binge drink.

The study, published in the journal Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, showed that binge drinking reduces the amount of white blood cells called macrophages that chew up bacteria and debris. This makes the wound more likely to be infected by bacteria.

Binge drinking also reduced levels of CRAMP – a type of protein that kills bacteria, and recruits macrophages and other immune system cells to the wound site.

“Together these effects likely contribute to delayed wound closure and enhanced infection severity observed in intoxicated patients,” the researchers concluded.

Call for tougher exams for international doctors

Higher exam pass marks are needed for international medical graduates to work in the UK, researchers from Durham University and University College London suggest.

The researchers found that there is a ‘performance gap’ between international and UK medical graduates, and that tougher tests will close this gap. However, the British International Doctors Association argues that there should be a standardised test for all.

In the UK, 57 per cent of doctors registered with the General Medical Council in 2012 qualified in other countries, with 27 per cent obtaining their medical degree from outside the European Economic Area (EEA).

Dr. Paul Tiffin from Durham University said: “Further research is needed to understand the potential reasons for these differences in performance, and in particular, the possible role that language and culture may play. A more detailed analysis based on country, not just region, of qualification would also be important to conduct in the future.

“There may be better ways of supporting overseas doctors to adjust to UK culture, and that of the health service more quickly.”

Tougher language checks for European doctors coming to work in Britain are expected to begin in June.

Dentist who changed patient records struck off

A Birmingham dentist has been struck off by the General Dental Council (GDC) for changing patients’ records.

Omar Narayan, who practised at the Hamstead Dental Practice in Birmingham, was charged with adding entries onto a patient’s original green-coloured private treatment record card. He also created the document entitled Assessment of Capacity for Proposed Dental Treatment/Decision.

Mr Narayan said he amended the records and created the assessment form at the request of Joyce Trail, the Practice owner and his employer at the time. He also created the document entitled Assessment of Capacity for Proposed Dental Treatment/Decision.

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England to have standardised cigarette packaging

The government is moving ahead with plans to ban branding on cigarette packaging in England, Public Health Minister Jane Ellison has said.

According to the BBC, Ms Ellison told MPs the latest independent report has found that the Australian legislation (Australia introduced the ban in 2012) has had a positive impact.

“We want our nation’s children to grow up happy and healthy and free from the heavy burden of disease that tobacco brings,” she said.

However, Labour has accused the government of delaying the decision for too long, with shadow health secretary Luciana Berger saying that it is “caving in to vested interests”, while some Conservative backbenchers say that the plan is an example of the “nanny state” and that there were enough warnings about the dangers of smoking already.

Ellison promised that changes will be implemented before the next election in May 2015, although MPs would be given a vote on the proposals before they came into force.

Conservative MP Sir Paul Beresford, a dentist, told those protesting the ban: “If I could arrange for them to come into an operating theatre to see the damage that oral cancer does to people they might actually change their mind.”