Changes in dentistry deterring future generations

Rising costs of training and education is off-putting says dentists

The increasing cost of training and education, together with the falling financial incentives, will deter future generations from joining the profession, said 74 per cent of dentists in a recent survey.

The survey, carried out by Wesleyan, found that 51 per cent of dentists would not recommend their profession to someone at the start of their career, and 40 per cent wouldn’t choose the same career again given the chance.

Sixty four per cent of dentists said they were worried about rising costs and reduced profits, followed by the new dental contract for England and Wales (85 per cent) and changes to the NHS pension scheme (55 per cent).

The survey further found that 45 per cent of dentists were concerned about NHS reforms, while 57 per cent worried about the growth of corporate dentistry.

This comes after NHS England announced proposals to reduce the salary paid to Dental Foundation Trainees in England. It is proposing a cut of nearly eight per cent to the salary which would see those beginning DFT in September 2014 being paid £28,076; more than £2,000 less than those currently completing their dental foundation training.

The British Dental Association has called this an ‘attack on the youngest and most vulnerable members of the profession’, and argues that dental students are graduating with increasing levels of debt. This means that they are already facing challenges to manage their finances and launch their careers.

In response, the BDA has launched a petition to oppose the proposals. At time of writing, the e-petition had 2,220 signatures. It can be viewed at http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/64208.
Ban sugary drinks from schools, says poll

A new poll has found that two thirds of people would support a ban on sugary drinks in all UK schools and academies.

Current government policy bans the sale of fizzy drinks, crisps and sweets in local authority-run schools, but leaves the decision of whether children can bring them to school up to head teachers. These rules do not apply to academies, free schools and private schools.

The poll, carried out for BBC 5Live’s Richard Bacon programme, found that more than four out of ten people would support a tax on sugary drinks, while 50 per cent said health warnings on packaging would encourage them to eat more healthily.

However according to the BBC, some representatives from the sugar industry say it is being ‘demonised’. Head of food science at AB Sugar Dr Julian Cooper said: “It’s quite simplistic just to demonise one ingredient to the exclusion of all others. We would say that we’re probably consuming too many calories and probably doing too little exercise and activity. There is probably an over consumption of all calories; not sugar per se.”

Food needs tobacco-like regulation, say health experts

The food industry should be regulated like the tobacco industry, international groups have said.

Consumers International and World Obesity Federation have called on the international community to develop a global convention to fight diet-related ill health, similar to the legal framework for tobacco control.

They say that obesity currently poses a greater global health risk than cigarettes, with global deaths attributable to obesity having risen from 2.6 million in 2005 to 5.4 million in 2010.

The groups are asking governments to introduce policy measures designed to help consumers make healthier choices. These could include pictures on food packaging of damage caused by obesity, similar to those on cigarette packages, as well as placing stricter controls on food marketing and requiring reformulation of unhealthy food products.

Consumers International Director General, Amanda Long, said: “The scale of the impact of unhealthy food on consumer health is comparable to the impact of cigarettes. The food and beverage industry has dragged its feet on meaningful change and governments have felt unable or unwilling to act.

“The only answer remaining for the global community is a framework convention and we urge governments to seriously consider our recommendations for achieving that.

If they do not, we risk decades of obstruction from industry and a repeat of the catastrophic health crisis caused by smoking.”

World Obesity Federation Director of Policy, Dr Tim Lobstein, says: “If obesity was an infectious disease we would have seen a billions of dollars being invested in bringing it under control. But because obesity is largely caused by the overconsumption of fatty and sugary foods, we have seen policy-makers unwilling to take on the corporate interests who promote these foods. Governments need to take collective action and a Framework Convention offers them the chance to do this.”

Call to ban microbeads in toothpaste in New York

New York’s Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is making calls to ban the sale of products containing microbeads, such as face washes and toothpastes.

Schneiderman said that the heads end up in New York’s waters and can stay there for decades, absorbing cancer-causing toxins. He has received support from doctors, educators, activists and legislators from across the state, who all demand that the state Senate pass the Microbeads-Free Water Act.

If adopted, products containing microbeads would be banned by 2016. It would make New York the first state to ban the sale of these products.

Halving levels of smoking could prevent 43 million deaths

Reaching globally-agreed targets for health risks such as smoking and alcohol could prevent more than 57 million deaths by 2025, a new study has found.

The study, led by Imperial College London and published in The Lancet, found that the large majority of the extra deaths will be in low-to-middle-income nations. Targets for reducing smoking and blood pressure will lead to the largest health benefits.

In 2011, the UN General Assembly agrees to reduce deaths from the big-four chronic diseases: cancers, diabetes, lung disease and cardiovascular disease. The World Health Organisation (WHO) created targets for both premature deaths from these chronic diseases and their key risk factors like smoking, alcohol use, high blood pressure and blood glucose, obesity and salt consumption.

The study shows that the big-four chronic diseases killed more than 28 million people in 2010; a number that is projected to increase to 59 million in 2025 is no new action is taken. If the six risk factor targets are achieved, more than 57 million deaths will be prevented by 2025.

Currently, global targets include a 50 per cent reduction in smoking levels, a 10 per cent reduction in alcohol consumption and a 50 per cent reduction in salt in food. However this new research found that if a more ambitious level of halving the levels of smoking is achieved, alongside the other targets, the risk of dying prematurely from the big-four would prevent nearly 45 million deaths by 2025.

Lead author of the study, Dr Vasili Kosits from Imperial College London, said: “Our study demonstrates that the tobacco use target should be more ambitious. Reducing the prevalence of smoking by 50 per cent by 2025 is feasible based on proven policy measures, and should become a global target to avoid millions of premature deaths.”

Man prosecuted for YouTube ‘dental technician’ claim

The General Dental Council (GDC) has prosecuted a man for unlawfully calling himself ‘a Dental Technican’ on YouTube.

Luis Fairman, who has never been registered with the GDC, unlawfully used the title ‘dental technician’ on a video entitling ‘NHS Dentistry – Ed’s Story’.

On Thursday 8 May, he appeared at Bodmin Magistrates’ Court and pleaded guilty to the charge. He has been fined £500 and ordered to pay a £50 victim surcharge. He must also pay £500 in costs to the GDC.
Tesco has announced that sweets and chocolates will be removed from checkout stands across all of its stores.

This follows research that found 65 per cent of customers said removing confectionery from checkouts would help them make healthier choices when shopping. Larger Tesco stores stopped selling sweets at checkouts 20 years ago, but for the first time they will be removed from all stores, including Tesco Metro and Express.

Tesco Chief Executive Philip Clarke said: “We all know how easy it is to be tempted by sugary snacks at the checkout, and we want to help our customers lead healthier lives. We’ve already removed billions of calories from our soft drinks, sandwich- es and ready meal ranges by changing the recipes to reduce their sugar, salt and fat content. And we will continue to look for opportunities to take out more.

“We’re doing this now because our customers have told us that removing sweets and chocolates from checkouts will help them make healthier choices.”

Tesco will be trialling a variety of healthier products at checkouts before implement- ing the full change across all stores at the end of the year.

Earlier this year, Lidl also announced that it was banning sweets and chocolate from checkouts in all of its UK stores.

James Hull has classic car collection  
up for sale

Dr James Hull, 55, who founded dental practice chain James Hull Associates, has put his classic car collection up for sale, with a reserve price of £100m.

Britain’s largest privately owned classic car collection, which has been 35 years in the making, will be sold to the highest bidder.

According to the Financial Times, Dr Hull is selling his collection because of health problems. It is made up of 457 cars, and includes Winston Churchill’s Austin and Lord Mountbatten’s Mini Traveller, as well as 365 replica miniature pedal cars and industry memorabilia.

The collection will be sold intact through a private bidding process. Dr Hull said: “Whether it’s to a national exhibition venue in the UK, or to a foreign bidder, I will insist upon it being kept together. Hopefully, it will end up staying here.”

Tesco removes checkout sweets
New photoactive molecule hardens dental fillings faster

Researchers at the Vienna University of Technology have developed a new dental filling material which is easier to harden.

The researchers, in collaboration with dental manufacturer Ivoclar Vivadent, have developed photoactive materials based on germanium, which they say reduces the duration of the hardening process for fillings.

Modern dental composites contain photoactive organic resins which react to light of a particular wavelength and readily solidify. Professor Robert Liska from the University said: “Usually, light in the violet and ultraviolet region is used.” Light with longer wavelengths can also be used, which penetrates deeper into the material, but the polymerisation process is less efficient. If the filling cannot be hardened in one step, the procedure is repeated several times.

The newly developed composite contains 0.04 per cent of germanium. The researchers say that the molecule is split into two parts by blue light, creating radicals, which initiate a chain reaction: molecular compounds (which are already present in the filling) assemble into polymers, and the material hardens.

Tests showed that the penetration depth could be increased from two mm to four mm with the new compound.

Saliva used to run power generators

Saliva can power micro-sized microbial fuel cells which produce tiny amounts of energy sufficient to run on-chip applications, a team of engineers from Penn State University has found.

“By producing nearly one microwatt in power, this saliva-powered, micro-sized MFC already generates enough power to be directly used as an energy harvester in micro-electronic applications,” the researchers wrote in the report, published in the journal NPG Asia Materials.

The researchers believe that the emergence of ultra-low-power chip-level biomedical electronics – devices able to operate at sub-microwatt power outputs – is becoming a reality. One possible application, the researchers say, would be a tiny ovulation prediction device based on the conductivity of a woman’s saliva, which changes five days before ovulation. The device would measure the conductivity of the saliva and then use the saliva for power to send the reading to a nearby mobile phone.

One in five adults vitamin D deficient

Twenty three per cent of adults have a vitamin D deficiency, new figures show. This comes after new guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Centre for Public Health confirmed that 1 in 5 adults are vitamin D deficient.

In light of these figures, the National Osteoporosis Society is urging people to get safe sun exposure every day between May and September to boost bone health, as part of their annual Sunlight Campaign.

Claire Severgnini, Chief Executive of the National Osteoporosis Society, said: “The Sunlight Campaign is all about raising awareness of vitamin D and its importance for bone health. We want to give clear advice about how to achieve this natural health boost safely so that people can be confident about going outdoors and getting the sun exposure they need without burning and damaging their skin.”

The charity advises that ten minutes once or twice a day in the sun with bare arms and legs is enough for us to top up our vitamin D levels to last through winter.

Dr Alison Tridstone, Chief Nutritionist and Director of Diet and Nutrition at Public Health England (PHE) said: “I am delighted to see the launch of this campaign which highlights the importance of getting enough vitamin D they need by exposing their skin to summer sunlight for short periods, taking care to cover up or protect their skin before it burns.

“In line with government advice, PHE recommends that people who are unable to get enough sun, as well as infants and young children aged six months to five years, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people over 65 years, take a daily vitamin D supplement to prevent deficiency.”

Scientists find mechanism behind red wine’s health benefits

Resveratrol, found in red wine, blueberries, cranberries and peanuts, is associated with beneficial effects in ageing, reducing heart disease and some types of cancer, and inflammation.

Scientists from The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) have now identified one of the molecular pathways that resveratrol uses to achieve its beneficial action. They found that resveratrol controls the body’s inflammatory response as a binding partner with the oestrogen receptor without stimulating oestrogenic cell proliferation, which is good news for its possible use as a model for drug design.

Study lead Kendall Nettles said, “Oestrogen has beneficial effects on conditions like diabetes and obesity but may increase cancer risk. What hasn’t been well understood until now is that you can achieve those same beneficial effects with something like resveratrol.”

According to Nettles, resveratrol doesn’t work very efficiently in the body. However, he said: “Now that we understand that we can do this through the oestrogenic receptor, there might be compounds other than resveratrol out there that can do the same thing – only better.”

Prosecuted man vows to carry on denture business

A Liverpool man who was prosecuted for unlawfully practising dentistry has said he will carry on his denture business.

Frank Mulholland, 74, was prosecuted for working as an un-registered Clinical Dental Technician from his dental laboratory located opposite the Royal Liverpool Dental Hospital, providing dentures and denture repairs.

Mr Mulholland later told the Liverpool Echo that he believes the prosecution was unfair and he was appropriately qualified to carry out the work he was doing. He said he will no longer do dentures but will continue to carry out dental repairs, which he says the GDC allows.

He said: “Most people come to me to have old dentures, I mix up the dental materials, put it in the denture and they press them back into their mouths themselves. I’ve never been registered with the GDC because I’m 74 and there’s a grandfather clause to say I didn’t have to join it.

The judge was horrible, she told me to plead guilty or the fine would be £12,000 rather than £4,000.”
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E-cigarettes increase drug-resistant bacteria

**E-cigarettes can increase drug-resistant bacteria and potentially life-threatening bacteria, while decreasing the ability of human cells to kill these bacteria, researchers have found.**

Researchers at the VA San Diego Healthcare System and the University of California, San Diego, tested the effects of e-cigarette vapour on live MRSA and human epithelial cells.

Lead investigator Laura Crotty Alexander said that exposure to e-cigarette vapour increased the virulence of the bacteria, helping MRSA escape killing by antimicrobial peptides and macrophages.

However, they found that when MRSA is exposed to regular cigarette smoke, their virulence is even greater. In a mouse model of pneumonia, cigarette smoke exposed MRSA had four-times greater survival in the lungs, and killed 50 per cent more mice than control MRSA. E-cigarette vapour-exposed MRSA were also more virulent in mice, with a three-fold higher survival.

Crotty Alexander said: “As health care professionals, we are always being asked by patients, ‘Would this be better for me?’ In the case of smoking e-cigarettes, I hated not having an answer. While the answer isn’t black and white, our study suggests a response: even if e-cigarettes may not be as bad as tobacco, they still have measurable detrimental effects on health.”

Apex Dental Care bought by Oasis Healthcare

Oasis Healthcare has acquired Apex Dental Care for an ‘undisclosed sum’.

Oasis also took over Smiles Dental in April 2014. The additions of Apex and Smiles to the Oasis portfolio will increase the company’s turnover by 40 per cent from £160 million to more than £225 million. Its practice network will have grown by more than 50 per cent from 204 to more than 310 in six weeks.

Justin Ash, CEO at Oasis Healthcare Group, said: “We are delighted to welcome the Apex team to Oasis. Both companies share the same commitment to providing high quality, easily accessible dental care and have developed a patient-led culture.

“Adding both Apex and Smiles to the Oasis portfolio rapidly transforms the size and scope of Oasis and underlines the rapid progress we are making in building a strong, trusted and customer-focused dental brand in a fragmented market. Our ambitions for growth do not stop here and we have a strong pipeline of acquisitions and new builds.”

Ben Chain, CEO at Apex Dental said: “We are pleased that Oasis will be taking forward the Apex practices and teams. Following initial discussions with the Oasis team it soon became apparent that we shared the same vision for how the dental market should evolve. By combining Apex’s dental practices with Oasis the group will be well placed to continue improving the breadth and quality of our service to patients with the benefit of an expanded network and even stronger clinical support team.”

Antibiotic resistance is ‘serious worldwide threat’

A new report from the World Health Organisation (WHO) reveals the serious global threat of antibiotic resistance.

The report reviewed the levels of antimicrobial resistance in many types of bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites, in 114 member states. It notes very high levels of resistance in all WHO regions in those that cause both community and healthcare-associated infections; this includes E.coli, MRSA and TB among others.

Dr Keiji Fukuda, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Health Security, said: “Without urgent, coordinated action by many stakeholders, the world is headed for a post-antibiotic era, in which common infections and minor injuries which have been treatable for decades can once again kill.”

Some WHO regions were found to have very high levels of antibiotic resistance in many different bacteria, but this wasn’t the case in the UK; resistance to carbapenems, the antibiotics of ‘last resort’ for multi resistant ‘klebsiella’ has increased over the years but the number of isolates is still relatively low in the UK.

There is an area of concern in the treatment for gonorrhoea, however, as the bacteria shows high levels of resistance across a range of antibiotics. This is coupled with sustained transmission and repeat infections.

Dr Paul Cosford, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director at PHE, said: “Whilst the UK does not have the levels of antibiotic resistance seen in some parts of the world we do see patients with infections resistant to antibiotics. This is a trend that is increasing and we take this very seriously.

“Combating the development and spread of antibiotic resistance requires a multifaceted approach and PHE is working very closely with its stakeholders to address this. Our work is contributing to the new cross-government national strategy that aims to tackle one of the biggest healthcare issues of our time.”

Teeth are new sign of social status

Teeth are becoming the new indicator of social status, according to social scientists Malcolm Gladwell.

The writer of David and Goliath said that obesity and bad teeth will now define status and hamper upward mobility, rather than race and gender.

He told The Times: “That’s kind of the way we’re moving, as the gap between the fit and unfit grows. The teeth thing and the obesity problem are the same: they are symptoms of the same set of inferences that are being drawn.”

He also added that having bad teeth will mean that you are denied certain entry-level jobs, leading to a lower chance of success.

This follows a poll conducted by Vision Critical last year that found people with whiter teeth were thought to earn £10,000 more on average than they actually did. Those surveyed thought their teeth made them look up to five years younger and improved their employment potential by 10 per cent.