BIRMINGHAM, UK: Recent changes to the dental care system seem to have taken their toll on dentists’ expectations for the future of their profession. According to a recent poll conducted by Birmingham financial service provider Wesleyan, half of the dentists surveyed stated that they would advise against entering the field when asked whether they would recommend dentistry as a career to friends or family members.

Most of those surveyed named increasing costs, including those for education and training, along with changes to pay and working conditions, as the main reasons for the grim future of the field. The overall majority admitted that pressure on the profession owing to these changes has increased.

Other issues, such as the introduction of the new NHS dental contract and the changes to the NHS Pension Scheme, were also identified as having an impact on the field in the years to come.

“There are huge stresses in the dental profession and great unhappiness, even fear, regarding our regulator, not to mention an uncertain NHS future,” Judith Husband, a dentist and member of the Wesleyan Members Advisory Board, said. “More than half of dentists in England and Wales are associates and, because of the massive rise in the value of practices, it is becoming increasingly difficult for those with an ambition to own their own practice to actually achieve this.”

In an earlier Wesleyan poll conducted among dentists last year, only every third dentist said that he or she would recommend the profession to others. In sharp contrast, more dentists then ever would choose to enter the profession again if given the opportunity to start over. According to the latest poll, almost two-thirds of dentists would choose the same career path again, compared with 60 per cent in 2014.

“Practising dentistry and looking after patients remains a rewarding career with lots of varied opportunities,” remarked Husband on the results.

DENTSPLY International and Sirona Dental Systems have entered into a definitive merger agreement and will operate under the name of DENTSPLY SIRONA in the future. Both companies will retain their respective headquarters. The current DENTSPLY head office in York will serve as the new company’s global headquarters, while the international headquarters will be located in Salzburg.

Upon close of the transaction, Jeffrey T Slovin, current president and COO of Sirona, will serve as CEO of DENTSPLY SIRONA and will be a member of the board of directors. Bret W Wise, current chairman and CEO of DENTSPLY, will assume the position of executive chairman of the newly founded company. In their respective positions, they will collaborate in executing the corporate strategy and in integrating the companies and their respective corporate cultures.

Together, the companies expect to generate a net revenue of about US$3.8 billion (€3.4 billion) and adjusted EBITDA of more than US$900 million (€796 million), excluding the incremental benefit of synergies.
Maternal stress linked to higher caries prevalence in children

By DTI

SEATTLE, USA/LONDON, UK: New research has related chronic maternal stress to a higher prevalence of cavities among children. The study, which was conducted by researchers at King’s College London and the University of Washington, further showed that chronic stress levels also influenced mothers’ caretaking behaviors, such as breast-feeding, dental visits, and giving breakfast daily.

While this is not the first study to associate maternal exposure to stress with childhood cavities, it is the first to examine the relationship using biological markers of chronic stress, an incident known as allostatic load (AL). In order to measure the impact of maternal stress on children’s oral health, the researchers analysed data from 716 US mothers of children aged two to six. Data was taken from the 1988–1994 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. The investigators noted that even though the data used was relatively old, the public availability of the file allowed for a unique opportunity to analyze mother-child pairs from a large US study sample.

The findings showed that caries were more common among children whose mothers had two or more biological markers of AL compared with no such markers—44.2 per cent vs. 27.9 per cent. They further identified that maternal AL was associated with socio-economic status, affecting care-taking behaviors, such as breast-feeding, dental visits, and giving breakfast daily.

“Mothers with lower income were significantly less likely to breastfeed or to have taken their child to the dentist in the prior year. They were also less likely to feed their child breakfast than higher income counterparts. It is important to better understand the dynamics of these links, so that we might develop significantly less likely to breast-feed than those with a normal AL level. This behavior was found to affect caries prevalence in children, as dental caries were almost twice as common among children whose mothers did not breast-feed than those whose mothers did — 62.9 per cent vs. 37.1 per cent.”

“This study uniquely highlights the importance of considering the influence of socioeconomic status and maternal stress on children’s oral health through mothers’ struggles to adopt healthy patterns that are major predictors of dental cavities, such as brushing her children’s teeth regularly, maintaining healthy dietary habits and taking regular visits to the dentist for preventive care,” Erin E. Masterson, a PhD student from the schools of Public Health and Dentistry at the University of Washington, said.

“Policy that aims to improve dental health, particularly the prevalence of cavities among children, should include interventions to improve the quality of life of mothers. Chronic maternal stress as a potential risk factor is something we need to consider, in addition to the wider implications of maternal wellbeing, social, and psychological environment on dental health,” Sabbah concluded.

First Brit to assume presidency of world’s largest ortho body

By DTI

LONDON, UK: Former President of the British Orthodontic Society Dr Allan R. Thom is the new President of the World Federation of Orthodontists (WFO), the organisation announced on the last day of its 2015 international congress in London. He is the first orthodontist from the UK to assume the presidency of the specialist body, which represents 150 orthodontic societies around the globe.

Thom is taking over the role from Dr Roberto Justus from Mexico, who has headed the WFO for the last five years. In his first speech, he said that under his presidency the WFO will help young dentists and those living in areas of civil unrest to play a more active role in the organisation.

“There must be strong support for our present fellows and elected representatives in these countries who are trying to maintain both a service and high standards for patients under challenging conditions,” he said.

Thom is’ term as president will end in 2020. An expert witness from Tunbridge Wells in Kent, Thom is has been a consultant orthodontist and author of clinical books for over 30 years. Among other things, he helped to establish an orthodontic service in Malta when working as a consultant adviser to the country’s health department. He has also served on the WFO’s Executive Committee for over a decade.

Thom (right) with his predecessor Dr Roberto Justus.

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