Poor dental appearance hinders career prospects

By DTI

LONDON, UK: A new YouGov survey on behalf of the British Dental Association (BDA) has found that over three-quarters of Brits believe poor oral health can hinder job applicants and their career prospects. In comparison, only half of the number ranked being overweight or dress code violations as a barrier to being hired.

The online poll involved 2,028 Brits aged over 18. When asked about different factors that may affect a person’s career opportunities, 77 per cent of respondents felt that visibly decayed teeth or bad breath would hinder a candidate’s chances of securing employment in public or client-facing roles, such as a receptionist or a solicitor. Just as many participants said the same about applicants with an unkept appearance.

In contrast, being overweight was considered as hindering to job prospects in public or client-facing roles by 38 per cent of the participants, and 43 per cent believed that not adhering to the expected dress code is similarly jeopardising.

“In a competitive jobs market people are realising that bad teeth mean bad prospects. This new evidence is a stark reminder that a winning smile isn’t just for fans of selfies, it’s for anyone who wants to get on in life,” commented Henrik Overgaard-Nielsen, chairperson of the BDA’s General Practice Committee, on the survey results.

“Ministers have viewed oral health as an ‘optional extra’ for far too long. For the children lining up for tooth extractions in our hospitals decay has long-term consequences. Whether they grow up to be solicitors or receptionists, the state of their mouths can affect their life chances,” Overgaard-Nielsen said.

Tooth decay remains the chief reason for hospital admissions among young children in the UK. Alarmingly, from 2011 to 2014, the number of tooth extractions in children under 18 increased by 26 per cent, the latest Public Health England figures have shown.

In addition, the 2013 Children’s Dental Health Survey found that insecurities about a poor dental appearance start early. The survey, which provides information on the dental health of children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, showed that 35 per cent of 12-year-olds and 28 per cent of 15-year-olds were embarrassed to smile or laugh owing to the condition of their teeth. Independent studies have found that oral health issues can have a lasting effect on children’s school readiness, as well as impair their nutrition, development and ability to socialise.

Targeting regions with high decay rates, the government recently announced ten pilot preventive programmes in England. However, no details of the scheme or dedicated funding have been released so far.