Large national gap identified

Private dental fees vary significantly throughout Britain, according to report

By DTI

DUBLIN, Ireland: Private fees for dental services have seen another 30 per cent increase in the last few months. A new survey conducted by Irish health care website WhatClinic.com has now found that patients in some parts of the UK have to pay up to twice as much for check-ups and other dental services than do patients in the rest of the country.

Among all areas surveyed, Milton Keynes stood out as the most expensive, with dental check-ups costing an average of £62 compared with only £31 charged by dentists in Birmingham, for example.

Other cities with high average fees in the same category were London (£53), Glasgow (£50) and Cardiff (£45). However, in Cambridge (£32), Manchester (£34) and Southampton (£35), patients pay the least for a dental check-up.

The nationwide average for a dental check-up is £46, according to WhatClinic.com. However, over 80 per cent of all of the cities and towns surveyed charge less than that, the results indicate.

The nationwide survey was conducted among 13,000 private dentists across Britain.

In addition to basic services like dental general check-ups, it compared average prices for four different speciality treatments, such as root canal therapy and implants.

For such treatments, patients in cities like London and Cambridge generally pay the most, while the rest of the country showed no distinguishable geographic pattern regarding the fees charged.

For example, root canal therapy costs the least north of the border in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as in Manchester and Belfast, where dentists also use to charge the least amount for implant treatment and tooth whitening procedures.

Fees for both of these treatments were also found to be at the lower end in Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne and Glasgow.

Patients in some parts of the UK have to pay up to twice as much than do patients in the rest of the country.
Professional footballers score low in oral health survey

By DTI

LONDON, UK: The previous season saw Premier League revenues soar to a new record of more than £3.5 billion. According to the paper published in the latest edition of the British Journal of Sports Medicine, over one-third of players who underwent oral health examinations were found to have dental decay and every second player exhibited signs of tooth wear. Periodontal disease was less prevalent, with one in 20 suffering from severe or moderate forms of the condition.

The study involved 384 players from the Premier League (including record champions Manchester United), as well as Championship and League One. The researchers examined the teeth and gingivae of 90 per cent of members of each senior squad and asked the players how they think oral disease affects their quality of life and overall performance. The majority of players surveyed regarded dental or gingival problems as having little influence on their overall performance on the pitch. One on five players, however, reported that oral health-related pain has affected their quality of life.

“Oral health is an area where many athletes have greater problems than the general population so it has been a massive achievement for so many professional football clubs to collaborate with each other to help us understand the scale of this problem better,” commented West Ham United’s Head of Medical and Sports Science Stijn Vandenbergoucke, whose club participated in the study. “Being part of this study has also helped us as a club to implement tailored interventions to treat and prevent further problems.”

West Ham regularly conducts preventive interventions with a dentist in the off- and pre-season.

“We are pleased that clubs such as West Ham are already embracing the findings and building on their existing interventions by placing oral health care at the forefront of their medical agenda,” Dr Ian Needleman, Professor of Restorative Dentistry and Evidence-Informed Healthcare at UCL Eastman Dental Institute, said. “We hope that other teams follow their lead and introduce robust oral health screening and promotion as a routine element of their programmes.”

Paediatric dentistry expert scoops Scottish Health Award

By DTI

EDINBURGH, UK: Since its first publication in 1997, Paediatric Dentistry by Prof. Richard Welbury has become the standard textbook for all dentists working with children in the UK and Ireland. For this and other contributions to the field, the former paediatric dentistry professor from Glasgow received the first ever Scottish Health Award in the category ‘dentist’.

Welbury beat fellow nominees Drew Gibson of Bransden Dental Care and Roger Levie from Hamilton in Lanarkshire in the new category, which was announced this year. “I didn’t even know I had been nominated until I got the call saying I was a finalist,” he told the Daily Record newspaper.

Organised annually in partnership with NHS Scotland and the Scottish government, the Scottish Health Awards have been held since 2010. They recognise individuals with various forms of oral disease have dental decay and every second examined the teeth and gingivae from severe or moderate forms of the condition.

In addition to his achievements as an author, Welbury was recognised for his work on guidelines on protection of children against abuse. He recently retired from his position of Professor of Paediatric Dentistry at Glasgow Dental Hospital that he held since 2001. Prior to that, he worked as a regional consultant and senior clinical lecturer at Newcastle University, his alma mater.

Welbury has served as president of both the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry and the European Academy of Paediatric Dentistry.

In July, he chaired the 25th Congress of the International Association of Paediatric Dentistry, which was held in Glasgow.
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A new dental destination
Dental Tribune paid an exclusive visit to the new Curaden Dental Clinic in London

Clinic manager Patricia Adam.

LONDON, UK: Maintaining a dental practice on the high street can be a complex endeavour, particularly in the capital, where setting one’s practice apart from the rest is often key to long-term success. The new Curaden Dental Clinic that recently opened in Mayfair is seeking to do exactly that. Conveniently located right in the heart of the city, only a 5 minute walk from Oxford Street, it is ready to take the city by storm with a holistic prophylaxis approach called “Prevention-One”.

The brainchild of Ueli Breitschmid, founder and CEO of Swiss preventative product specialist Curaden, and Zurich dentist Rolf Kufus, this practice branding concept involves not only a comprehensive product range, including toothpaste and brushes under the well-known CURAPROX brand, but also tailored teaching programmes developed to help dentists better communicate the importance of oral health prevention to patients.

“Dental Tribune paid an exclusive visit to the new Curaden Dental Clinic in London during the last few weeks, and it all came together in the end,” said clinic manager Patricia Adam. “With Prevention-One, in contrast, patients are intended to be healthier and happier with their smiles.”

Adam knows exactly what she is talking about. As a trained dental hygienist, she learnt all about the unique concept when working at Kufus’s dental practice in Switzerland for several years. While the offer to develop and manage the first Curaden-branded practice in the UK initially came as a surprise for the native German, she soon adapted to the idea, despite the challenges that came with moving to another country and transforming an existing dental practice that did not meet the requirements for the new clinic.

“Of course we certainly had to deal with a lot of regulations during the last few months, but we are happy that it all came together in the end,” Adam emphasised.

In order to accommodate the busy lifestyles of most Londoners, the clinic is open until late and on certain Saturdays. According to Adam, the last few weeks have seen many former patients returning and starting to recommend the practice to their family, friends and colleagues.

“We have also seen many patients presenting for a second opinion on their dental problems,” she said.

All staff members, from the receptionists to the practitioners, undergo Curaden’s iTop training on a regular basis, a three-level programme on the demonstration and explanation of prophylaxis as more than just fluoridation. In the long run, the concept is intended to change the role of the dental practice, moving away from restoration and starting to focus on prevention, while ensuring the practice remains profitable.

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“Consumers are pushing dentists toward metal-free implantology”

An interview with Dr Sammy Noumbissi, founder of the International Academy of Ceramic Implantology

A great deal of progress has been made in terms of materials, techniques and design of dental implants since the beginnings of modern implantology over 50 years ago. While titanium and titanium alloys have always been in use, the search for metal-free implantable materials began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and during the last decade, zirconia has emerged as the most reliable implantable bioceramic. The International Academy of Ceramic Implantology (IAOCI) is an organization entirely dedicated to ceramic and metal-free alternatives to metal implants. It was founded in 2011 by Dr Sammy Noumbissi, with whom Dental Tribune had the opportunity to speak about the mission and vision of the IAOCI, as well as the state of ceramic implantology today.

Dental Tribune: Dr Noumbissi, could you please provide some background information on the development of ceramic implants?

Dr. Sammy Noumbissi: The use of dental implants to replace teeth has increased very rapidly in the last 15 or more years. With this increase in dental implant procedures, the number of manufacturers has increased too. Also, we have witnessed the introduction of various alloys of titanium over time.

Now, just like with any pharmaceutical or medical product, the increase in demand and changes in production methods come with problems and challenges. Although initially anecdotal, reports of titanium and titanium alloy intolerance have increased and are increasingly being investigated and demonstrated in the scientific dental literature. Based on the body of research available today, this intolerance of implant alloys can in great part be attributed to the release of metal ions in the host bone and surrounding tissue as a result of the breakdown and corrosion of metal alloys in the presence of body fluids and the oral environment in particular. Such facts have been established and widely recognized in orthopedics.

In the late 1960s, pioneers in ceramic implantology and notably Professor Sami Sandhaus began the search for modern non-metal implantable ceramic materials. However, many of the early ceramic plants were monocrystalline in their structure and could not survive the demands of the oral environment. Then came the use of polycrystals and in the early 2000s yttria-stabilized zirconia bioceramic emerged as the material of choice for metal-free intraoral implantation in dental implantology.

How did you become involved in research on ceramic dental implants?

My interest in ceramic implants came about in two ways. First, on a personal level, when I discovered that the metal fillings and implant I had in my own mouth were determined to be the source of some of the health problems I had experienced. Second, on a professional level, where a few of the patients to whom I had provided metal implants returned for check-ups or more implants, and upon reviewing their medical and dental history, it was also determined that the implants were at least in part responsible for the health problems they were experiencing. I then began to actively look for alternatives and at two decades had established themselves in both medicine and implant dentistry as the most bio-inert implantable material available. In 2011, two colleagues and I decided to create the IAOCI.

What is the primary aim of the IAOCI?

Associations and academies exist around various types of trades and industries. The common purpose of such groups is to organise and create a supportive environment for those involved in the respective area. The IAOCI was created with the same spirit, not only to organise metal-free implantology but also to provide the profession as a whole with quality and high-level continuing implant education on bioceramics as implantable materials. The IAOCI is also a resource for the public seeking practitioners who have experience with ceramic implants.

In your opinion, what are the dangers of metal implants?

Metal and most particularly titanium implants have been very successful. Their use has grown exponentially and with that manufacturers have multiplied, as well as manufacturing protocols. As a result, we have observed a steady increase in the alloy elements mixed with titanium during the manufacturing process. The problems begin when the metal implant highly alloyed or not, once placed is subjected to functional stresses, galvanism, body fluids and the harsh oral environment. The combination of mechanical, chemical and electrical events induces cracks and pitting of the metal, as well as cracks and in the oxide layer, and the implant undergoes corrosion attack. The corrosion attack, which is essentially an oxidation process, leads to the release of metal ions that studies have shown to be found in the surrounding bone, lymphatics, spleen, liver and in some cases crossing the blood–brain barrier.

What alternatives to metal dental implants are currently available on the market?

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Today, the well-researched and proven alternative material to metal for dental implants is zirconium dioxide, also known as zirconia. This is also a well-proven fact in medical orthopedics. Zirconia is the crystal phase of zirconium and as such it is not a metal. There are different manufacturing protocols for zirconia for dental implantation and they all lead to a variety of polycrystal bioce-ramics, such as zirconia-toughened alumina, but isotropic-pressed zir-conia and yttria-stabilized zirconia. The common and most important properties of these bioce-ramics are inertness in the bone and oral environ-ment, structural stability, absence of electrical activity, extremely low plaque retention and superior aesthetics.

Is the success rate of metal-free im-plants comparable with that of tita-nium implants?

In the early days, there were chal-lenges. The materials were mono-crystalline with very highly polished and glossy surfaces, which made the early implants prone to fracture, poor attachment of bone-forming cells and low bone-implant contact. The manufacturing protocols, de-sign, surface modification tech-niques and technologies of zirconia implants have evolved to a point where bone integration is ensured and comparable results are ob-tained.

Are ceramic alternatives the future of dental implantology?

Every industry projection one sees about implants signals good news for the future. Implants are now and will continue to be widely accepted by patients and the profes-sion. Both groups agree that this is state-of-the-art treatment. How-ever, owing to technology, the public is much more informed about health issues and therapies. We are in a similar situation today to that of five years ago. We have had patients challenge dentists toward metal-free implan-tology for the last ten years. One of our guests has over 15 years of docu-mented experience with zirconia implants. We will also have work-shops on different implant systems, ceramic regenerative products and revolutionary soft-tissue- and hard-tissue-enhancing protocols proven to optimize implant integration and long-term stability.

As a matter of fact, our member-ship has doubled in the last two years and when prospective or new mem-bers are asked why they want to join or joined the academy, the most common response is that they are seeking a forum where they can ob-tain structured information and training.

Another frequent reason is that dentists have had patients challenge or inform them on the use and oc-casionally the existence of ceramic implants. Through technology and these access to information, the public obtains information faster than we busy clinicians.

The AOOG will be hosting its fifth Annual Winter Congress in Montego Bay, Jamaica. What can people expect from the event? The theme in 2016 will be the last decade in ceramic implantology.

We will have 14 speakers from seven different countries who will share their experiences with a variety of ceramic implant systems over the last ten years. One of our guest speakers has over 15 years of document-ed experience with zirconia implants. We will also have work-shops on different implant systems, ceramic regenerative products and revolutionary soft-tissue- and hard-tissue-enhancing protocols proving to optimize implant integration and long-term stability.

Thank you very much for the inter-view.