Sweet tooth

Scientists have discovered that taste cells have several addition sugar detectors on top of the previously known sweet receptor. This sweet receptor is the primary mechanism in recognising sugars such as glucose and sucrose and also artificial sweeteners. However, according to senior author Robert F Margolskee, MD, PhD, a molecular neurobiologist, some aspects of sweet taste could not be explained by the primary receptor. “The taste system continues to amaze us at how smart it is and how it serves to integrate taste sensation with digestive processes,” Margolskee was quoted as saying. The study suggests that different sugar taste sensors have varied roles.

Frogs have teeth!

According to new research, frogs have re-evolved “lost” bottom teeth after more than 200 million years. Tree-dwelling Gastrotheca guentheri is a creature that carries its eggs in pouches on its back. Dr John Wiens led a team of scientists from Stony Brook University, New York to investigate this exceptional feature. Their findings are reported in the journal Evolution.

Tobacco not displayed

After much deliberation regarding the display of tobacco in shops it has now been passed that tobacco products will no longer be displayed in shops. The new legislation, which is better for health, will come into force for large stores on April 6 2012 and on April 6 2015 for all other shops. According to a statement from the Department of Health only temporary displays in “ceremonial and circulatory” will be allowed, with the rules phased in to minimise the impact on businesses. With regards to plain packaging for cigarettes and other tobacco products, the Government is keeping an “open mind” and is planning a consultation on different options before the end of this year.

Regulator admits to backlog in registration process

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has admitted that it will not have completed the registration process for a significant proportion of dental practices who have submitted their forms to the regulator.

In an email sent to practices the CQC stated: “We have received approximately 7,400 valid applications from primary dental care and independent ambulance agencies. We are working hard to have those providers fully registered as soon as possible and some providers have already begun to receive their notices of decision (NoDs) and certificates of registration.

On 1 April, there will be some providers who are still in the final stages of registering. We would like to reassure any provider who has submitted a valid application to us, but has not received their NoD or certificate, that we will consider them to be ‘in process’.

Some dentists have been upset by this news, calling for the CQC to put back or even abandon its regulatory plans for practitioner unless it is in a position to cope with the workload. One dentist, Dr Simon Thackerney, emailed CQC’s Cynthia Bower to share his views on the situation, commenting: “As an organisation you are quite obviously not ready for the registration of dentists. Given the tone of emails and communication received from yourselves previously, the penalties for our failure to meet the deadline set by the CQC/Government were nothing short of draconian.

According to the email, your organisation is not going to meet the deadline set. What draconian measures will follow upon the CQC, and you as its head given this admission?”

The spokeswoman continued: “Providers who may not receive their certificates or Notices of Decision by 1 April because their CRB checks are still being processed. It is a legal requirement for all providers to have a CRB disclosure in order to be registered. The CQC had hoped that PCTs would be able to provide evidence of these for most NHS providers, but this has not proved to be the case.

While we are encouraged by the work PCTs are doing to try to help us, sourcing confirmation about provider’s disclosures via PCTs is proving challenging. However, more than 90 per cent of dental providers have now applied for registration and we are processing these applications.

A CQC spokeswoman said: “Many providers may not receive their certificates or Notices of Decision by 1 April because their CRB checks are still being processed. It is a legal requirement for all providers to have a CRB disclosure in order to be registered. The CQC had hoped that PCTs would be able to provide evidence of these for most NHS providers, but this has not proved to be the case.

Dr Thackerney added: The strength of feeling within the profession at the failure of the CQC to perform its duty is growing significantly.

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