Massive patient recall after breach by dentist in Nottinghamshire

By Dental Tribune International

Thousands of patients treated by a dentist at Daybrook Dental Surgery in Gedling near Nottingham have been recalled by NHS England in Nottinghamshire to be tested for blood-borne viruses. Dr Desmond Jude D’Mello was recently suspended for 18 months by the General Dental Council for violation of cross-infection control standards in multiple cases. Police are also investigating the death of a woman believed to have been treated by the dentist and who died of viral acute myocarditis last year.

Charges against D’Mello arose after a whistle-blower sent secretly filmed footage to the NHS. Overall, he is believed to have treated more than 20,000 patients since he started practising at the clinic in the early 1980s. While NHS investigations found that he did not carry blood-borne viruses himself, the patients he saw could have been placed at low risk of being exposed to hepatitis B or C and HIV, Medical Director for NHS England in Nottinghamshire Dr Doug Black said.

He said that his organisation is currently working with Public Health England and the General Dental Council to resolve the issue. Support is also being provided by Southern Dental, which has been running D’Mello’s former practice since August, according to Black.

Patients believed to have been treated by the dentist are advised to contact the authorities for further advice. NHS has set up a community clinic at the health centre in Arnold, as well as a telephone line, to support patients treated by the dentist.

"Effective treatments are available for all blood-borne viruses," Dr Vanessa MacGregor, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control for Public Health England in the East Midlands, said.

Millions lost to front-line health care abuse in Northern Ireland

By Dental Tribune International

Health and dental care worth £4.4 million were lost to cross-country fraud last year. Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland has reported. It said that, of over 30,000 dental and ophthalmic treatments claimed for exemption in the region in 2013, over 8,000 have been under investigation owing to charges of abuse.

More than 400 people have been removed from general practitioner lists in the last 18 months owing to fraudulent activities and more than 2,000 are facing legal action.

In most of these cases, exemption from health care charges was claimed under false pretences or fraud was committed by staff submitting false time or travel sheets.

In one case, for example, £23,000 was claimed by a nurse for her manager’s signature. The total loss is estimated at 3–5% of the region’s health care budget, which is £4.5 billion.

"Fraud affects us all. All organisations suffer as a result and the health service is no exception. Everyone penny lost to fraud means less to spend on front line services, meaning that the range of treatment and care we may receive is severely reduced," commented Northern Ireland’s Health Minister Jim Wells on the figures.

He said that the government is doing everything possible to investigate fraud and recover money lost, but support is also needed from the public to tackle the problem.

"No one is above the law. I would encourage everyone within the Health and Social Care system to familiarise themselves with how to report it and ask the public to ensure that they are aware of what they are entitled," Wells said.

Since 2013, the service has been working with Counter Fraud Services to detect and prevent cases of fraud. This collaboration has resulted in a conviction rate of 96 percent, according to Health and Social Care.
Barts study on severe periodontitis reveals looming crisis

By Dental Tribune International

Figures by the National Health Service indicate that at least one in 15 adults in the UK currently suffers from the most severe form of periodontal disease. Worldwide, the situation looks even more devastating with the condition to be found in roughly 11 per cent of the earth’s population. An international review published by researchers from Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry and dental institutions in Australia and US in the journal for Dental Research has recently provided the first insights into the global dynamics of the disease and where it is most prevalent.

According to the paper, prevalence as well as incidence of severe periodontitis was reportedly highest in East Sub-Saharan Africa and most parts of South America. Several countries including Australia, Indonesia or Greece, among others, also ranked below the global average.

Regions with low occurrence were North America, followed by developed countries in the Asia Pacific region, as well as Oceania and Western Europe.

While no statistically relevant difference could be found between genders, the researchers said the condition seemed to increase with age throughout all surveyed countries. Hence, people at age 38 and beyond are most at risk for developing severe periodontitis.

Overall, the study found that more than 700 million new cases of severe periodontitis worldwide add to the already large burden every year, which makes the condition rank among the six most prevalent diseases worldwide. If untreated, it can lead not only to physical pain and psychological discomfort, but also to functional limitation, as well as physical and psychological disabilities, according to the author, Director of Research at Barts Health NHS Trust Prof. Wagner Marcenes, who headed the study.

“The number of severe periodontitis cases has increased dramatically between 1990 and 2010. Since we did not include other types of periodontitis such as its mild and moderate forms, we are facing an even more serious problem in the population’s oral health,” he commented on the results. He said that the data are currently being evaluated further to find out what might cause this high prevalence including socioeconomic indicators and other risk factors.

One of the largest assessment ever conducted on the disease, the review was looking at epidemiological data from more than 50 studies involving 500,000 patients from 37 countries. While it provides insight into the realities of the disease, according to the researchers, the results will have to be treated with caution owing to the problem on how to actually measure periodontal disease. A new standard introduced by the American Academy of Periodontology and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in 2007, for example makes it difficult to compare any data collected prior.

In the report, the researchers indicated any site with Community Periodontal Index of Treatment Needs = 4, clinical attachment of larger than 6 mm and pocket depth of ≥4 as periodontitis.

GDC suspends dentist in rare case of malpractice

By Dental Tribune International

The General Dental Council (GDC) has reported that it is suspending the registration of a dentist from Northern Ireland, after a public hearing held by the disciplinary panel in London found him guilty of over 100 charges of malpractice. According to the council, he will be banned from practising dentistry for five years unless he exercises his right of appeal against being struck off the register within 28 days.

The suspension is a rare case of a member of the dental profession in the UK facing such a high number of malpractice charges. In addition to allegations of having misdiagnosed oral lesions and other conditions that led to the development of oral cancer, the council said that he had failed to carry out biopsies when necessary and misinformed patients about their condition.

Other charges against him involved poor patient management and record keeping. The council said that he had mistreated 27 of the patients he saw while working as a consultant at the Royal Victoria Hospital’s School of Dentistry in Belfast between 2006 and 2010. He was removed from the post when patients he had treated presented with symptoms of oral cancer.

Until August, he had worked as a dental educator at Queen’s University Belfast, but lost in an unfair dismissal case.

Rise in endocarditis despite antibiotics guidelines for dentists

By Dental Tribune International

Scientists at the University of Sheffield have identified a significant rise in the number of people diagnosed with a serious heart infection alongside a large fall in the prescription of antibiotic prophylaxis to dental patients owing to respective guidelines introduced several years ago. The researchers suggest that their results will provide the information the guideline committees need to reevaluate the benefits of administering antibiotics as a preventative measure.

The pioneering study is the largest and most comprehensive to be conducted with regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, which recommend that dentists no longer give antibiotics before invasive treatments to patients considered at risk of the life-threatening heart infection infective endocarditis, which in 40 per cent of cases is caused by bacteria from the mouth.

The team of international researchers, led by Prof. Martin Thornhill at the University of Sheffield, has discovered that since the NICE guidelines were introduced in March 2008, there has been an increase in cases of infective endocarditis above the expected trend. By March 2013, this accounted for an extra 35 cases per month. They also identified that the prescription of prophylactic antibiotics fell by 89 per cent from 10,900 prescriptions a month before the 2008 guidelines to 1,235 prescriptions a month by March 2013.

Thornhill, Professor of Oral Medicine, said: “Infective Endocarditis is a rare but serious infection of the heart lining. We hope that our data will provide the information that guideline committees need to re-evaluate the benefits, or not, of giving antibiotic prophylaxis.”

Thornhill stressed that health care professionals and patients should wait for the guideline committees to evaluate the evidence and give their advice before changing their current practice.

He added: “In the meantime, healthcare professionals and patients should focus on maintaining high standards of oral hygiene. This will reduce the number of bacteria in the mouth which have the potential to cause infective Endocarditis and reduce the need for invasive dental procedures to be performed.”

Barbara Harpham, National Director of Heart Research UK, said: “The findings play an important part in the ongoing exploration of the link between dental and heart health. Projects such as this one are vital to support the ongoing collation of evidence to support our understanding of how oral health can impact upon the heart and other conditions within the body. We are committed to furthering medical research in the UK and welcome these new findings.”

The data was analysed by an international group of experts from the University of Sheffield, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, and the University of Surrey in the UK, as well as from Mayo Clinic and the Carolinas Healthcare System’s Carolinas Medical Center in the US. The study was published in The Lancet journal online on 18 November under the title “Incidence of infective endocarditis in England, 2000–13: A secular trend, interrupted time-series analysis” and presented last week to more than 19,000 international attendees at the American Heart Association annual meeting in Chicago.

The research was funded by a grant from the National Heart Charity Heart Research UK, health care provider Simplyhealth and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.