

The BDJ News section accepts items that include general news, latest research and diary events that interest our readers. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible. Please direct your correspondence to the News Editor, Arveen Bajaj at the BDJ, The Macmillan Building, 4 Crinan Street, London N1 9XW or by email to [bdj@bda.org](mailto:bdj@bda.org)

## Improving children's oral health

Senior Paediatric Dental Officer Wendy Bellis recently won an award for her contribution to the oral health of children in Islington, London. Ms Bellis, of Finsbury Health Centre, has worked for Islington and Camden PCTs for the past 20 years and sees children with severe special needs. Over the past five years, around 80% of her caseload has involved working with children with autism. The award was presented by *Fever Pitch* author Nick Hornby, whose autistic son has been treated by Ms Bellis for several years.



Wendy Bellis receives her award from Nick Hornby

## Postgraduate students awarded



Two diploma prizes were awarded at the Bristol University Open Learning for Dentists Diploma in Dental Postgraduate Studies awards ceremony this year. Vinny Syme from Taunton won the Marsh Midda Prize for the best student of the Periodontology course 2005 and Graham Stokes won the Schottlander Prize for Prosthetics. The university is now in its eleventh year of awarding diplomas and has awarded over 500 to date.

## Mass letter writing targets government

Around six thousand dentists have written to Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt and local MPs in a mass letter-writing campaign designed to pressure the Government to stop dragging its feet over reforms to NHS dentistry.

The letter campaign was the result of an emergency motion at the annual conference of Local Dental Committees (LDC) last month and has been coordinated by the British Dental Association (BDA). The BDA says the campaign was prompted by dentists' growing frustration at the Government's failure to publish details of a new contract - due to be introduced in less than 10 months' time - and of proposals for a new system of dental patient charges. Chair of this year's LDC Conference Susie Sanderson said: "We know that thousands of dentists will have written letters over the last month calling for action from the Government. The campaign reflects the level of frustration felt by dentists about how the Government is handling the biggest shake-up to NHS dentistry in half a century. The continued under-funding of NHS dentistry and the current uncertainty about the future is of great concern to both dentists and patient." LDCs are statutory bodies recognised by Primary Care Trusts (in England) which represent dentists primarily working within general dental practice. A conference of Local Dental Committee representatives is held annually to debate issues relating to the provision of primary dental services and other wider matters.



# DIARY

## August 2005

FDI World Dental Congress 2005

Date: 24-27.08.05

Venue: Palais de Congrès, Montréal

Email: congress@fdiworldental.org

www.fdiworldental.org

## September 2005

Oral health through public health: Professor Aubrey Sheiham, A celebration of his work

Date: 5-6.09.05

Venue: University College London

www.ucl.ac.uk/dph

The Irish Endodontic Society 12th Biennial Congress of the European Society of Endodontology

Date: 15-17.09.05

Venue: Dublin

Tel: +353 1 6799144

Fax: +353 1 6486197

www.esedublin2005.com

## October 2005

BDA Metropolitan Branch: Spot the Composite

Date: 01.10.05

Venue: British Dental Association, London

Tel: 01943 604400

British Dental Trade Association International Dental Showcase 2005

Date: 6-8.10.05

Venue: NEC Birmingham

Tel: 0870 241 3365

www.dentalshowcase.com

146th American Dental Association Annual Session and Technical Exhibition

Date: 06-09.10.05

Venue: Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia

Email: annualsession@ada.org

www.ada.org

DenTech China 2005

Date: 26-29.10.05

Venue: Shanghai Everbright Convention & Exhibition Center, Shanghai

Tel: 86-21-6294 6966

Fax: 86-21-6280 0908

Email: mail@showstar.net

www.dentech.com.cn

## November 2005

2nd European Congress on the Reconstruction of the Periodontally Diseased Patient

Date: 25-27.11.05

Venue: Radisson SAS Scandinavia Hotel, Copenhagen

Email: kongress@quintessenz.de

www.quintessenz.de/ecrp

## Survey shows shortage of specialist orthodontists

A new survey of the orthodontic workforce has found that there is a shortage of specialist orthodontists in the UK with some parts of the country experiencing a high ratio of patients to specialist.

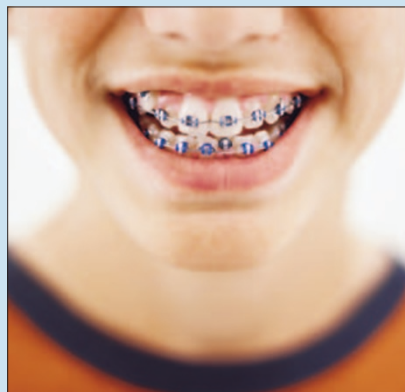
Of the 1,660 providers of orthodontic treatment in the UK, 919 are specialists, who treat on average 400 cases per year compared to 187 cases per year for non-specialists. One fifth of the orthodontic workforce is due to retire in the next six years and 66 of the number due to retire are hospital-based consultants, of whom there is already a shortage.

The areas where it is most difficult to see an orthodontic specialist are Shropshire and Staffordshire, Essex, Kent and Medway, County Durham and Tees Valley, Trent and North and East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire. These are the areas with the highest ratio of 12-year-olds to orthodontic specialist, 12 being the optimum age for treatment. The report added that nearly 10 per cent of orthodontists would need to be relocated to even out the distribution of specialists to 12-year-olds, but this would still leave an overall shortage.

The National Orthodontic Workforce Survey was carried out by members of the Department of Oral Health and Development in the University of Sheffield's School of Clinical Dentistry. It was called for by the British Orthodontic Society (BOS) and supported by a grant from the Chief Dental Officer.

The authors of the report also assessed the gender of the workforce. This was partly in the light of a Department of Health review of women practitioners in the general dental workforce which showed that approximately 22 per cent of respondents were not practising dentistry and nearly half work part-time only.

However, the survey showed that the picture in the orthodontic specialty was very different. The mean number of sessions worked by women was only slightly less than that of men (7.2 sessions as compared to 8.2) with more male providers than females planning to retire in the next 15 years. The survey predicted that as the present generation of predominantly male senior orthodontists retires the proportion of female orthodontists will increase dramatically.



BOS Secretary David Tidy said: "We welcome the main conclusion of the report which supports earlier concerns based on anecdotal evidence regarding the geographical inequality in specialist workforce and the shortage of training places. We would emphasise the need for measures to be taken at the earliest opportunity to address these issues."

However, he added that the report failed to consider the shortage of academics in orthodontics who were crucial in both training and to the future of orthodontic services.

## Oral Health Month 2005 launched

Colgate Oral Health Month 2005 will take place this September and will deliver key oral health messages to patients in partnership with UK dental professionals. In association with the BDA, the theme for 2005 is 'Fighting Together for Better Oral Health' and will include key messages for the general public. These are to brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, change toothbrushes every three months, make regular dental visits and try to avoid sugary foods, especially between meals.

The initiative, now in its fourth year, will give dental professionals the opportunity to get involved in a nationwide campaign that will be supported by TV advertising. In order to promote improved oral health habits Colgate will also distribute educational materials and over one million oral care products in areas with the highest levels of caries.



## Patient safety addressed

The Alliance of UK Health Regulators on Europe, (AURE) has welcomed the European Council of Ministers decision to adopt the EU Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Since the launch of the draft Directive in 2002, it has lobbied the European Institutions to improve aspects of the text - including the so-called '16 weeks provision' which would have allowed healthcare professionals from any EU country to work for up to four months per year, every year, without being registered with the UK regulator. This would have meant that if there had been a problem with the care, conduct, or competence of a visiting practitioner, the UK regulator would have had no powers to take action against that individual.

The Alliance believes the final text represents an important victory for patient safety in Europe and has welcomed the fact its main concerns have been addressed.

A further aspect of the Directive welcomed by AURE is the strengthened provision for the exchange of fitness to practise and disciplinary information among Member State regulators. However, AURE believes that further steps must now be taken by regulators across the EU to bring about an effective system of proactive, reciprocal and continuous exchange of information that really functions in practice.

"The issue of information exchange is of key importance in protecting patients across Europe," said Hew Mathewson, President of the General Dental Council.



## Alzheimer's link found

Researchers from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles have found a link between gum disease and Alzheimer's disease. A new study of dementia in identical twins suggests that exposure to inflammation early in life quadruples the risk of developing Alzheimer's. Dr Margaret Gatz, lead author and Professor of Psychology in the USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, presented her findings at the first Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Prevention of Dementia last month in Washington, DC. If the link is confirmed, it would add inflammatory burden to the short list of preventable risk factors for Alzheimer's.

The study, *Potentially Modifiable Risk Factors From Dementia: Evidence From Identical Twins*, used information from 20,000 participants in the Swedish Twin Registry where surveys were completed in the 1960s, when the registry was created, and from hospital discharge records. These contained information about participants' education, activities and health history. The researchers found 109 "discordant" pairs of twins, where only one twin had been diagnosed with dementia.

The surveys included questions about loose or missing teeth and the team used the answers to build a crude indicator of periodontal disease. The survey concluded that it is not that good oral health can prevent Alzheimer's, but that an inflammatory burden early in life, as represented by chronic gum disease, may have severe consequences later.

Dr Gatz was inspired to focus on inflammation by the work of USC gerontologists Caleb Finch and Eileen Crimmins, who published a paper in the journal *Science* linking today's record life spans to lower rates of childhood infectious diseases, such as gum disease, flu, rheumatic fever, tuberculosis and other illnesses. Such diseases are often preventable, raising hope for prevention of Alzheimer's. "If what we're indexing with periodontal disease is some kind of inflammatory burden, then it is probably speaking to general health conditions," Dr Gatz said. "There was quite a lot of periodontal disease in our twins, and at that time in Sweden there was a lot of poverty."

