

BRIGHT brushing initiative receives £1.9 million

A new research project led by the Universities of Dundee and Sheffield has been awarded almost £2 million to investigate ways of improving the oral health of young people living in deprived areas.

The researchers will work with 48 schools and nearly 6,000 young people in Scotland, England and Wales on the four-year Brushing Reminder 4 Good Oral Health (BRIGHT) initiative.

BRIGHT, funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), will investigate whether a classroom-based lesson about dental health followed by a series of text messages could increase how often and how well children aged 11–16 brush their teeth – and ultimately reduce levels of tooth decay.

In each school, one class will receive the talk and a series of text messages, while another will not. The team will collect information on tooth decay, frequency of brushing, and the impact decay has on the children's lives to determine whether those in the programme develop better oral health habits than those who don't participate.



Professor Nicola Innes and Dr Zoe Marshman

Professor Nicola Innes (pictured, right), from Dundee's School of Dentistry, said, 'Dental decay is preventable and, in some ways, that should be simple. Just brush with a toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. However, enacting that prevention at the level of the individual person isn't always so simple.

'We are looking forward to taking up the challenge in this often overlooked

group – young people living in deprived areas – who suffer a disproportionate amount of dental disease, toothache, and subsequent loss of sleep and time at school.'

The classroom-based teaching session has been created by Dundee's School of Education and Social Work, while the text messages will be delivered via TextApp, a software tool devised by the School of Medicine's Health Informatics Centre.

The Dundee and Sheffield researchers will work with colleagues from the Universities of Leeds (Professor Sue Pavitt and Dr Peter Day) and Cardiff (Professor Ivor Chestnutt) and the York Trials Unit on the project.

Dr Zoe Marshman (pictured, left), Reader in Dental Public Health at the University of Sheffield, said, 'We welcome the opportunity to help children in secondary schools in deprived areas achieve good dental health which can then be maintained throughout their lives.'

More information about the project is available at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/research/trials/research/trials/bright/>.

Startling lack of awareness of HPV-mouth cancer link

A new study investigating awareness of mouth cancer in the UK has revealed a startling lack of awareness when it comes to the disease and one of its leading causes, the human papillomavirus (HPV).

Research carried out by the Oral Health Foundation found that as little as three in 20 (15%) British adults recognise HPV, the world's most common sexually-transmitted infection, to be a cause of mouth cancer.¹

The report also showed that more than two in three (67%) are unaware of oral sex increasing a person's mouth cancer risk by sexually transmitting the HPV virus.

During the next decade, HPV is expected to overtake smoking and excessive alcohol consumption as the leading cause of mouth cancer.

With many unable to assess their own level of risk, Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive

of the Oral Health Foundation, is concerned this may lead to a growing number of mouth cancers being diagnosed too late: 'Almost every sexually active person will contract HPV as some point during their life. For most people, HPV is completely harmless and will not result in any symptoms or health problems. More often than not, it will lay dormant and then it will simply be thrown off, before the person even knows they have been infected.

'In some cases, however, HPV can lead to mouth cancer.'

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that there are more than 600 million cases of HPV infection worldwide.

There are now in excess of 7,500 new cases of mouth cancer in the UK a year, a figure which has increased by more than two-thirds (68%) in the last 20 years.²

An early diagnosis of mouth cancer increases a person's chance of survival from 50% to 90%.

November is Mouth Cancer Action Month and the Oral Health Foundation is encouraging people to be Mouthaware by regularly checking for unusual changes to the mouth, lips, head and neck. The charity has developed a full guide to mouth cancer self-examination³ and ask those who discover anything suspicious to contact their dentist or doctor immediately.

HPV Action, a collaborate partnership of 49 patient and professional organisations, is currently campaigning for gender neutral HPV vaccination.

1. Oral Health Foundation. Mouth Cancer Action Month 2017 Survey. Sample 2,004.
2. Cancer Research UK. Oral cancer statistics. 2017. Available at: <https://goo.gl/in6dbY>.
3. Oral Health Foundation. Signs and symptoms. 2017. Available at: <https://goo.gl/hKKc9A>.