

SPECIAL FEATURE

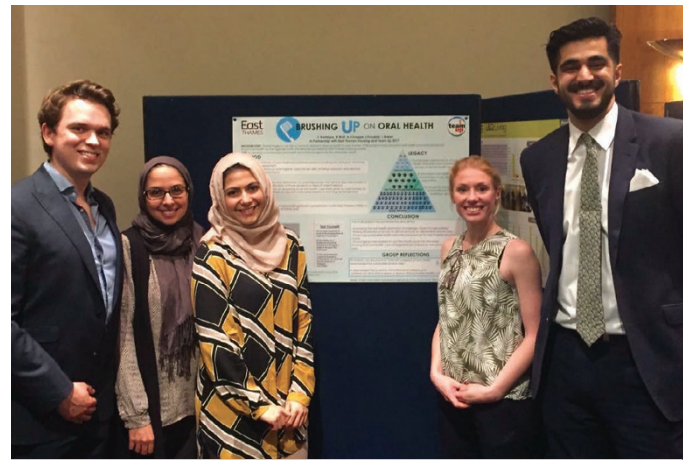
Team Up volunteering initiative: Smile Project

By J. Doughty, S. Keshtgar, R. Wali, A. Chaggar and L. Baker

Volunteering can be both a personally and professionally rewarding way to make use of our dental skills and knowledge. Through the Health Education England Team Up initiative, our group of five (including foundation dentists, an academic clinical fellow in special care dentistry and psychiatry core trainee) delivered a comprehensive oral health promotion education package to care workers who provide support to residents living within East Thames housing charity.

Team Up is a London-wide volunteer programme that links together willing medical and dental trainees and other healthcare professionals with charitable organisations that are seeking creative and novel ways to improve health outcomes for vulnerable members of society. These initiatives may include health promotion, improving communication, enabling access to care and a whole range of other projects.

The aim of our Smile project was three fold: (1) to educate lead staff working with people residing in East Thames housing charity about oral health and its importance for general health; (2) to integrate dentistry as a health priority in each of the East Thames sites by developing a 'red flag' poster for urgent dental issues and by providing information on access to local services; and (3) translation of knowledge by tiered dissemination of the oral health education programme to all care workers at each site. Lead care workers were tasked with disseminating oral health knowledge to other staff and residents as well as undertaking a yearly oral health update. Oral health knowledge was measured by a pre- and post-teaching questionnaire that showed an increase in oral health knowledge score from 4 prior to the session to 13 (out of a maximum score of 14) once the teaching had been delivered.



The Smile Project team with their poster at the Team Up celebration event in May 2017

After the completion of the projects there was a Team Up celebration event that gave all of the 2016/2017 volunteers an opportunity to showcase their projects through the presentation of a poster and to share their experiences with one another.

The project was inspiring, fun to organise and was a wonderful opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues and with a charity to develop a useful initiative that will hopefully help to improve oral health for residents of East Thames into the future. The Team Up experience offers the opportunity to work with people in the community and helps trainees to develop an understanding of the role and operation of third sector organisations and to gain experience in project management. We would highly recommend the experience and encourage other young dentists to volunteer. For more information about getting involved visit the Team Up webpage at: <http://www.lpmde.ac.uk/training-programme/specialty-schools/public-health/teamup>. ■

Birmingham showcases dental research

The University of Birmingham's Dentistry Research Showcase, held in early May, was designed to bring leading academics and industry partners together to learn about the ground breaking research taking place in Birmingham. Through industry engagement the University is able to deliver serious impact and influence. This Showcase provided an opportunity to connect industry's needs with the University's expertise.

Throughout the morning, visitors heard from a number of speakers, including a guest lecture from Professor Herb Sewell, a Birmingham alumnus and leader in the field of immunology research and a long-standing panel member of the Medical Research Council. University researchers delivered a 'Research in Six' session, which covered a breadth of topics including biofilms, phototherapy, periodontal disease, ultrasound research and nanoparticles, and the University's approach to clinical trials. Research poster sessions allowed guests to see the variety of research being undertaken at Birmingham in more depth and to discuss projects with the academics leading them.

Visitors were given a guided tour of the new £50 million Birmingham Dental Hospital, which opened its doors in April 2016 and is the first integrated, stand-alone new build dental hospital and school in the UK for 40 years. The building sits a mile from the University's central campus and is a key element of the new Edgbaston Medical Quarter. The building is divided into two wings, one housing the University's School of Dentistry and one for all public facing services. With its 154 dental surgeries and expert staff members, the facility is equipped to treat over 120,000 patients a year.

Professor Iain Chapple, Head of the School of Dentistry, said: 'It was a great privilege to be able to share our research vision and to be able to showcase the world class research and environment we now have in the University. The breadth and quality of our collaborations and the key strategic developments happening in Birmingham were brought to life, and I believe their huge scope and potential was greatly appreciated by our guests. I am very grateful to all who attended for giving up their valuable time to talk science and impact with us that day.'