

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.

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GUIDANCE TO AID WITH THE GLOBALISATION OF HEALTHCARE

A new publication produced by the global alliance of health professionals, the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), has been launched. *A Core Competency Framework for International Health Consultants* provides a practical guide for those seeking to engage health-care consultation services and presents a benchmark against which individuals who wish to offer their services can assess themselves and if necessary seek additional training before taking up assignments.

The guidance was published as a result of the globalisation of healthcare which has generated tremendous expansion in the field of international health consulting, which now includes a large number and variety of specialists.

The publication is available for viewing and downloading via the WHPA website (www.whpa.org) at www.whpa.org/pub2007_IHC.pdf.

BDA CONFERENCE 2008

Registration for the British Dental Conference and Exhibition to be held on 1-3 May in Manchester opened last month. The first week attracted 274 online bookings.

The 2008 conference will feature a much larger exhibition than usual, an excellent line-up of clinical and business speakers, and a variety of social events to attend. Visit www.bda.org or call the registration team on 0870 166 6625 / + 44 (0) 1252 771 425 (from overseas) to make your delegate booking.

HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM



TreeHouse, the national charity for autism education, is appealing to the dental community for funds towards constructing a permanent National Centre for Autism Education.

TreeHouse runs a special school for up to 80 pupils with severe autism and its dental care programme aims to introduce pupils to basic dental hygiene and accustom them to having their teeth looked at by a community dentist (who offers her time free of charge).

It claims the positive impact of this 'desensitisation' to the dentist and the dental chair has been enormous as visits to the dentist can be particularly traumatic for children with autism.

It adds that children with autism may have erratic eating habits making dental hygiene a concern and be unable to tolerate any sort of 'intrusion' into their mouths with a toothbrush. Due to their difficulties in communicating they may not be able to tell anyone when they have a toothache.

TreeHouse is currently based in temporary accommodation and to ensure the ongoing success of its dental care programme, needs support to provide a fully equipped dental suite in the new building. For further information on how you can help, please visit www.treehouse.org.uk or telephone 020 8815 5444.

SUGAR FREE GUM INTRODUCED TO RATION PACKS



A New Zealand Army deployment arrival haka

New Zealand Defence Dental Services have introduced a sugar free chewing gum to all New Zealand ration packs to enhance soldiers' oral health. The gum contains casein phosphopeptide-amorphous calcium phosphate (CPP-ACP), believed to slow progression of dental caries, to remineralise enamel subsurface lesions and stimulate the production of saliva.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Gray, Assistant Director Defence Dental

Services, welcomed the introduction of the gum to the ration packs as an oral health preventative measure and also hopes its inclusion will raise awareness of the importance of oral hygiene when soldiers are in the field environment.

New Zealand troops are currently serving on 17 peacekeeping operations, UN missions and defence exercises around the world, from Antarctica to Sudan, Timor-Leste to South Korea.

GENE THERAPY GRANT AWARDED TO EASTMAN

Eastman researchers Dr Anne Young, Professor Irwin Olsen and Dr Vehid Salih, of the Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering Unit, have been awarded a £220,000 grant to develop novel UCL Eastman Dental Institute-patented polymers that can convert rapidly from liquid to solid in the body after injection for use in gene therapy.

Within the polymers are genes protected within calcium phosphate nanoparticles. Slow release of such nanoparticles will provide sustained cell exposure to genes protected within structures that can aid

their uptake and transport through the cells. This work will be conducted in collaboration with Professor Jayne Lawrence at Kings College.

Delivering healthy genes into the cells of individuals with genetic abnormalities (gene therapy) can potentially alleviate a wide range of medical conditions. Current procedures for introducing healthy genes into cells and tissues rely primarily on virus-derived 'carriers' to deliver the therapeutic gene, but the safety of such procedures is of increasing concern, according to the Institute.

GDC TO REVIEW POLICY

The General Dental Council (GDC) has agreed in principle to abolish its current system for adding dental professionals' additional qualifications to its registers. For dental professionals who already have additional qualifications listed on the registers there will be no change while the consultation takes place. Dental professionals will not be able to add any additional qualifications in the meantime.

The Council says that it has been considering the benefit to patients of recording additional qualifications for some time as there were concerns that recognition of additional qualifications implied significant endorsement by the GDC.

In addition the policy was inconsistent and unfair to many registrants including those waiting to have qualifications added to the register or dental care professionals for whom there is no formal recognition system. Before making any changes, the GDC will consult on the next steps.

IMMUNE PARALYSIS RELATED TO OBESITY

Researchers have shown that obesity is linked to weakened antibacterial immunity in experiments with obese mice fighting a *Porphyromonas gingivalis* infection.

The research conducted by Dr Salomon Amar, Boston University (USA) Goldman School of Dental Medicine Associate Dean for Research, looked at how control and obese mice fought *P. gingivalis* infection.

The team infected the mice using silk thread that had been coated with bacterial broth and tied around their molars. It was determined that obesity acutely compromised the immune responses to gum infection as well as infection of the entire body based on the bone loss and bacterial counts of the mice.

The paper was published online ahead of print in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 10 December.

DIARY

JANUARY

Achieving high standards in infection control

Date: 25 January 2008
Venue: BDA, London
www.bda.org/events

FEBRUARY

Preparing for retirement

Date: 1 February 2008
Venue: Aldwark Manor Hotel, York
www.bda.org/events

143rd Chicago Dental Society Midwinter Meeting

Date: 21-24 February 2008
Venue: McCormick Place Lakeside Center, Chicago, USA
www.cds.org/mwm

LAUNCH OF NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PRISON DENTISTS

A new practical guide has been launched geared towards prison dentists and those commissioning prison dental services. *Guidelines for the Appointment of Dentists with Special Interests (DwSIs) in Prison Dentistry* is produced by the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) in conjunction with the Department of Health, the Oxford Deanery, the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry and NHS Primary Care Contracting.

It is intended to help prison managers and healthcare commissioners define more closely the role and working arrangements for prison dentists. The competency frameworks set out in the document will also help prison dentists to identify their learning needs, and undertake further training so that they can improve standards of care.

According to the organisation, prisoners generally have a poorer standard of oral health, with increased levels of emergency cases, higher rates of substance misuse and smoking, and

underlying poor nutrition. The demand for dental care in prisons is also increasing as the prison population continues to grow.

Helen Falcon, Postgraduate Dental Dean for NHS Education South Central (Oxford and Wessex Deaneries) and Chair of the working group which developed the guidelines, explained that prison dentists, along with other healthcare workers in the prison setting, are in a unique position requiring them to balance the need to provide the best possible care to their patients with the priorities and restrictions imposed by the prison environment.

'These include the inability to provide sedation and general anaesthesia within the prison setting, different protocols for pre- and post-operative pain relief, the need to minimise referrals outside of the prison, and security issues,' she said. Standards for the appointment of DwSIs in conscious sedation are currently being developed, with a launch expected in early 2008.

SMOKING CESSATION SERVICES SUCCESSFUL

Poorer people in the UK are quitting smoking in larger numbers than their better off neighbours, according to a new study. Of the 1.5 million smokers supported by NHS stop smoking services between 2003 and 2006, researchers found that smokers from poorer areas were using these services - and successfully quitting - more often than those from more affluent communities.

Researchers from the University of Bath's Tobacco Control Research Group and the University of Edinburgh used data from smokers who were treated by NHS smoking cessation services in the three-year period.

It compared data from smokers who accessed services in officially designated disadvantaged areas (called Spearhead areas) compared with other parts of England.

Dr Linda Bauld from the University of Bath commented, 'Our study shows that the NHS smoking cessation services are helping to reduce the health

gap between rich and poor, which is good news for the overall health of the nation. It is important that wider tobacco control measures, in particular successful implementation of

the recent ban on smoking in public places, and rises in tobacco taxes, are pursued if more significant reductions in smoking-related inequalities are to be achieved.'

The study was published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, 2007; 16: 400-444.

