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Sunnymede Trust delivers

In this short article, Iain Corran presents a new Oral Health Manual produced by the Sunnymede Trust which aims to help health workers in disadvantaged communities, particularly in developing countries, to provide basic care in areas with limited resources and no dental specialists.

On Wednesday 18th July, The Sunnymede Trust will deliver a dental lecture to students on the Tropical Nursing diploma course at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). This follows the success of a previous session in January when the Trust combined a training day for nurses with the launch of their new *Oral Health Manual*. The manual has been produced by the Sunnymede Trust as part of Project Teeth Relief and has been written for use in areas of the world with limited or no access to dental specialists.

The Tropical Nursing diploma course runs twice yearly and is co-ordinated by Claire Bertschinger, the nurse who inspired Live Aid in 1984 and published her autobiography *Moving mountains* in 2005. I had previously delivered dental lectures for this course so Claire agreed to combine the manual launch with a training day for the nurses. Over 50 students were given copies hot off the press, along with the opportunity to explore practical elements as outlined in the manual. The day was well received and many students said that they would now view oral health with a much greater sense of awareness. Claire said: 'I could have done with a copy of the Teeth Relief manual when I was working for the Red

Cross in Ethiopia. The cook for the children's feeding centre died from acute septicaemia after his tooth was extracted at the local medical centre with a pair of rusty pliers.'

The Teeth Relief manual is designed to serve as an educational and training resource and covers oral anatomy, dental disease, oral health promotion, cross infection control, examination and diagnosis, treatments and procedures, and common oral problems. It has been written by Sharon Rankin and Marian Lennon. Sharon is a practising dentist and chair of the Sunnymede Trust, while Marian is a creative writer who does not have any medical training but says she has spent enough time in the dental chair to want to help others avoid it if they can! 'We worked on the premise that if Sharon could explain the dental concepts and language to me, then I could explain it to non-specialists' she said. Feedback so far has been very positive, suggesting that they have got the balance just right.

Previously there were two other books covering this field: *Simple dental care for rural hospitals* by David Halestrap and *Where there is no dentist* by Murray Dickson. Both works were written in the 1970/80s and much has since changed in

the way that oral healthcare provision is now understood. At the heart of the Teeth Relief manual is a continued awareness of the need to offer 'best practice' advice that can be realistically applied in areas with limited resources.

Sharon Rankin set up the Sunnymede Trust in 1989 as a registered charity following voluntary work in Zambia. The Trust aims to share knowledge and expertise with a wider audience and contribute towards a sustainable improvement in world oral health. Experiences led the Trust to focus effort on the creation of a new learning and educational resource and this *Oral Health Manual* is the result. 'We know that curative treatments alone cannot solve dental problems in the developing world,' says Sharon, 'so we wanted to create a professional resource that could be used to help relieve pain and make sustainable oral health improvement a reality, enabling communities to shape their own development.'

'Historically, oral health schemes have frequently been delivered as 'separates'' she adds, 'relying on imported expertise and supplies, so they often flounder when the dentists leave and the toothpaste runs out. The Sunnymede approach favours integration within existing

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Students from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine show off their first editions after their lecture in January 2007

health programmes to ensure that oral health becomes a routine component of all education, as clean mouths become a routine of daily life.'

This manual will interest a wide range of people. If you work in the field of oral

or community health in disadvantaged communities, especially in developing countries, it will be invaluable as a training aid. It can also serve as a reference tool for those working in oral health promotion and education across many

sectors. The Trust is keen to retain contact with users of the manual in order to grow a database of oral health projects and put people in touch, to avoid duplication of effort. The next stage of the programme is to develop and maintain a database and website and there are also plans to translate the work into other languages when funding is obtained.

The Trust is delighted to have developed a link with the LSHTM which will enable it to speak directly to about 150 nurses each year. Many of them plan to work or volunteer abroad or currently have links with overseas projects, so the manual is already finding its way around the world.

The Sunnymede Trust is very grateful to the many people who helped to create this unique resource and is now keen to share it wherever there is need. If you would like copies of the manual or are interested in helping the Trust to further its work, please contact Sharon Rankin on info@teethrelief.org.uk.

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Iain Corran is a trustee of the Sunnymede Trust: registered charity number 328326.

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