

## DENTAL STORYBOOKS COULD HELP CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

The Oral Health Foundation is backing the use of children's storybooks with dental narratives following a new study which has shown they can be a highly effective way of helping prepare children with autism for a visit to the dentist.<sup>1</sup>

The research, published in *Special Care in Dentistry*, found that almost two thirds (64%) of caregivers felt that dental stories were a useful tool for both themselves and their child in preparing them for a visit to the dentist.

The stories were delivered to children via a range of different media, including picture based story books, photographs and video, with caregivers questioned before and after the stories to analyse the effect they had on the children's attitudes to visiting the dentist.

The Oral Health Foundation believe the use of dental stories could lead to a significant benefit in the long term oral health of children with autism by helping to develop behavioural routines involving positive behaviour such as tooth brushing.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, CEO of the Oral Health Foundation, said: 'Everybody needs to look after their oral health, but for children with autism developing the required behaviour to do so effectively can be difficult due to the level of intimacy involved when they are learning to look after their oral health effectively.'

'Many children with autism do not have the capacity to read and comprehend the feelings, experiences and motives of others

and can have difficulty understanding the need for things many of us find simple. We have found that such activities like toothbrushing and dental visits can be particularly stressful for children with autism, as well as those with other learning difficulties, which can lead to increased levels of oral health disease.

'By using dental stories, we can help them achieve an improved level of care and from this there can be real benefits to their oral health for life. By using storybooks to help incorporate behaviour, such as visiting the dentist or brushing their teeth, into their daily routine it can mean they can look after their own oral health more effectively later in their life.'

Children with autism are recognised to be at a higher risk of some oral health problems, including: bruxism, ulceration, erosion due to regurgitation and tooth decay as a result of limited dietary preferences and sweets being given as behaviour rewards.

As part of their work to help young children develop basic oral health behaviour such as habitual brushing using storybooks social stories, the Oral Health Foundation provide a wide range of children's books through their Educational Resources store.

1. Marion I W, Nelson T M, Sheller B, McKinner C M, Scott J M. Dental stories for children with autism. *Spec Care Dentist* 2016; **36**: 181-186.

## Vaccine developed to prevent periodontitis

Researchers from the University of Melbourne have developed a vaccine to treat periodontitis. So far the vaccine has been tested in mice and if successful in human trials, will be able to prevent chronic periodontitis.<sup>1</sup>

The vaccine is targeted at the bacterial species that has been singled out as the main pathogen leading to gum disease.<sup>2</sup> The vaccine will stimulate the host's immune response to produce antibodies towards this species of bacteria, preventing it from building up and reducing the inflammatory response and the level of destruction.

1. O'Brien-Simpson N M, Holden J A, Lenzo J C *et al.* A therapeutic Porphyromonas gingivalis gingipain vaccine induces neutralising IgG1 antibodies that protect against experimental periodontitis. *Npj Vaccines* 2016; **1**: 16022; doi:10.1038/npjvaccines.2016.22; published online 1 December 2016.
2. Hajishengallis G, Darveau R P, Curtis M A. The keystone-pathogen hypothesis. *Nat Rev Microbiol* 2012; **10**: 717-725.

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## BDA BACKS TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAMMES

The British Dental Association (BDA) has backed new calls from NICE for oral health programmes in schools, calling on national government to support local authorities to turn the tide on an epidemic of tooth decay.

NICE has recommended councils provide toothbrushing schemes in schools and nurseries in areas where children have poor oral health. Similar schemes exist in both Wales and Scotland, where devolved governments have set out dedicated oral health strategies that include outreach to early years and primary schools, and which have contributed to record breaking falls in decay. Despite progress by many

local authorities, there is no equivalent programme in England.

Health officials have claimed that devolution of powers to local authorities in England represents a barrier to rolling out a dedicated national programme.



## DCP SYMPOSIUM, CARDIFF

The Dental Postgraduate Section of the Wales Deanery in collaboration with The Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh will be holding their 8th DCP Symposium entitled 'Past, Present & Future' on Friday 5 May 2017 at the Marriott Hotel, Mill Lane, Cardiff.

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