

## A work of FiCTION

Shaun Sellars continues this exciting and essential series on ethical dilemmas in dentistry which appears in every second issue of the *BDJ*.

The results of the FiCTION (Filling Children's Teeth: Indicated Or Not?) trial have recently been published.<sup>1</sup> If you've missed out on this piece of research, the three year, multi-centre, primary care study looked at how best to treat caries in high caries risk children of 3–7 years of age. Children were either solely given best practice preventative advice, or prevention combined with either conventional restorations or the use of stainless steel crowns using the Hall technique.

FiCTION was a vast piece of research. There is no comparable study in regards to the number of children studied over such a time. It was well designed, and despite some apparent ups and downs throughout the trial, has produced a multitude of data.

So what are the results? That's the most intriguing part of the research. The study showed that, in high caries risk children with previous caries experience, when looking at the incidence of pain and/or infection, there was no significant difference between each arm.

This result came as quite a surprise to me, and possibly to the researchers. As a

rule, we like to think that the treatment we carry out makes a difference to patients. To find out that in some, for the most vulnerable people we work with, that looks unlikely to be true hits at the very core of what we do.

Does this mean that the research wasn't worthwhile in carrying out? Absolutely not. While the statistics may show no difference in treatment arms, there are many ways in which we could interpret the results.

First and foremost, this highlights the need to prevent caries in the first place. Once the decay is there, it's too late. Unsurprisingly this has been the focus of the press coverage following the trial. It's an easy to grasp concept that we can all get on board with.

Secondly, the results reinforce the idea that any treatment we carry out is only ever going to be of limited benefit. What is best for teeth is teeth. Nothing we do to try and replace what's gone will last forever.

This is an issue. Most of us make our income based on the treatment we carry out, not for trying to prevent those issues arising. While most recent contract reforms have paid lip service to preventative measures, there is still some way to go.



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What this trial highlights is that the results of research go much further than the numbers produced. These statistics require careful interpretation to understand what they truly mean, and the story behind the numbers is what counts.

While on first inspection, this piece of research has come up with a negative result, this is valuable information. Without this kind of research, we will keep carrying out ineffective treatments while assuming that we're doing the best for our patients.

There are still a multitude of unknown unknowns in dentistry. The FiCTION trial expands a little on our knowledge of what doesn't work, and knowing what doesn't work is just as important as knowing what does.

### References

1. Innes N P, Clarkson J E, Douglas G V C *et al.* Child Caries Management: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Dental Practice. *J Dent Res* 2019; **99**: 36–43.

## Sugar levels drop in yoghurts

A survey of yoghurt ingredients in the UK show that sugar levels have significantly decreased in the last two years, but concerns about overall nutritional content remain.

Scientists from the University of Leeds have examined product and nutrient information from 893 yogurts available in UK supermarkets and compared all products to a 2016 baseline survey. Their

study, published on 7 January in the journal *Nutrients*, found there was an overall 13% decrease in total sugar content.<sup>1</sup>

The number of different children's and organic products has also decreased since 2016 – 23% and 27%, respectively.

The available products classed as 'low sugar' – containing less than five grams of sugar per 100 grams – increased from 9% in 2016 to 15% in 2019.

While the result is promising for the UK's efforts to tackle obesity and hit sugar reduction targets, the authors also warn that yoghurt is still not a straightforward choice for consumers looking for healthy foods.

Lead author Dr Bernadette Moore, associate professor of obesity in the School of

Food Science and Nutrition at Leeds said: 'Simply put, lowering sugar intake is the best way to prevent obesity and protect our teeth – particularly for small children – so these are encouraging findings and a good insight into current market trends.'

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said: 'The food industry has a responsibility to ensure healthier options are available and that our children aren't flooded by products full of hidden sugars. We hope to see them step up even more to this challenge.'

### Reference

1. Moore J M, Sutton E H, Hancock N. Sugar reduction in yogurt products sold in the UK between 2016 and 2019. *Nutrients* 2020; **12**: 171; DOI: 10.3390/nu12010171.

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