

BFS welcomes Ministerial intention to proceed with community water fluoridation

The Chair of the British Fluoridation Society (BFS), Dr Barry Cockcroft CBE, has welcomed a statement made by the Minister of State for the Department of Health and Social Care, Will Quince, of his intention to proceed with increasing the coverage of community water fluoridation schemes in North East England.

The announcement was made during the Minister's speech to a committee debate on 'Draft Water Fluoridation Consultation Regulations 2022' on Monday 24 October.

The Minister said: 'One element in deciding whether we proceed with a water fluoridation proposal is of course a cost-benefit analysis of said proposal, and any new proposal would have to demonstrate that the benefit to health represents good value for the investment of public money being proposed.'

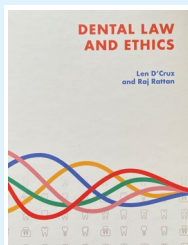
'Where the conditions are met, we want more of the country to benefit from water fluoridation. I am pleased to announce that, subject to the outcome of this debate and any future consultations, funding has been secured to begin expansion across the North East into Northumberland, County Durham, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Teesside, including Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Darlington and Middlesbrough. I know that the local authorities in those areas are strong supporters of water fluoridation.'

Speaking following the announcement, BFS Chair Dr Cockcroft said: 'We welcome Minister Quince's positive statement, which is an indication that the Government is serious in its intention to widen the coverage of water fluoridation, starting with a public consultation on its proposals for expansion across the North East of England next year.'

'This is a hugely positive development for organisations like the BFS, dentists and oral health practitioners up and down the country, who have been campaigning for the introduction of more schemes to prevent tooth decay and unnecessary suffering in our communities due to poor oral health. The BFS is keen to give its support when public consultation events on the proposals are held locally.'

'As the Minister stated, the expansion will enable an additional 1.6 million people to benefit from water fluoridation. It will help to reduce the levels of tooth decay in the area and, over time, reduce the numbers of children who need to be admitted to hospital for tooth extractions because of decay. As children in more deprived areas are at greater risk of tooth decay, expansion will help to level up dental health for the children and families who need it most.'

BOOK REVIEW



DENTAL LAW AND ETHICS

Len D'Cruz and Raj Rattan;
2022; Stephen Hancocks Ltd; £53.99; pp. 250;
ISBN: 978-0956566867

It is not uncommon to find, when clinicians spend too much time in the company of lawyers, that they begin to take on the tut-tutting, patronising demeanour of their learned friends.

The authors have avoided the temptation for such smuggerly, and have produced a welcome and accessible text to assist clinicians in the increasingly challenging world of dental law and ethics. I tried (really) hard to find fault with the chapter on ethical perspectives, as it is my area of teaching, and instead came away with some new understanding and ideas, prompting the reflection there is always something to learn. Some of the content is inevitably condescending, the chapter on record keeping mildly irritating to anyone who prefers common sense over tick-boxing, but that is the world we work in. The chapter on consent is an excellent scholarly achievement which avoids the usual hand-wringing over Montgomery and quotes the reassuring judgement from *Spencer v Hillingdon* (which itself is from paragraph 81 of the Montgomery judgement) saying that, once patients have

been given the correct information, the risk and consequences of their choice becomes their own. The opening chapter mentions 'the unremitting and dehumanising machinery of the General Dental Council's fitness to practise process', referencing Kelleher from this journal¹ and going into more detail of the process in a later chapter on complaints. Whilst this makes for uncomfortable, and sobering, reading it is important that clinicians have some understanding of what our colleagues may have been through, or be going through, or what we ourselves may be faced with should we be distracted by simply attending to a patient and forgetting to grade a radiograph, or record the shade of a temporary crown. Here I would have liked an ethical analysis of what the GDC and their procedures should be like (expert, judicious, prompt, proportionate) and how the 2009 change from a supportive governing body to a Stasi-esque regulatory body² has been so damaging to the profession, and sadly, our patients. It is because of this awkward regulatory and legal working environment that this book is essential reading; every practice should have a copy for reference, and for its practical guidance (how long should we keep patient records for?).

David Obree

References

1. Kelleher M. State sponsored dental terrorism? *Br Dent J* 2017; **223**: 759–764.
2. Hancocks S. A profession no longer. *Br Dent J* 2007; **202**: 235.