Other journals in brief

A selection of abstracts of clinically relevant papers from other journals.

The abstracts on this page have been chosen and edited by John R. Radford.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Is water fluoridation still necessary?

Kumar JV. *Adv Dent Res* 2008; 20: 8–12

Are there parallels between adding folic acid to foods and water fluoridation?

In the US, almost a third of the total cost of treating childhood illnesses is spent on dental disease. Should fluoride still be added to the water supplies? The former East Germany has discontinued water fluoridation. Other countries, such as Switzerland and some South American countries, have added fluoride to salt, a policy that has mixed health messages. Scandinavian countries have adopted school-based preventive programmes. Water fluoridation reduces inequalities in dental health although 'not the proportion of caries-free children among 5-year-olds'. In addition, there is a life-time economic saving, with respect to dental treatment, of approximately \$61 per person. The author suggests that there are parallels between water fluoridation and the addition of folic acid 'to cereals and grains to eliminate neural tube defects'.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2009.265

BIOTERRORISM

Detection of disease outbreaks by the use of oral manifestations

Torres-Urquidy MH, Wallstrom G *et al. J Dent Res* 2009; 88: 89–94

Feasibility of using oral manifestations of bioterrorist agents as a data source for biosurveillance.

The aim of this study was to determine if oral manifestations of exposure to bioterrorist agents could be used to detect an attack, at an early stage. Oral signs and symptoms of anthrax, tularemia (also known as 'rabbit fever' or 'deer-fly fever'), botulism and smallpox were obtained from literature searches. Using sophisticated statistical methods, this study 1) simulated an attack from each of these bioterrorist agents, and 2) examined the performance of an algorithm to detect peaks in their activities. This was in order to distinguish simulated attacks from normal 'background noise'. The model was more effective for the detection of simulated attacks of smallpox and botulism than for anthrax and tularemia which showed 'poor performance'. This was because the oral manifestations of smallpox and botulism (enanthema and dry mouth, respectively), occur less frequently than those from the other agents (oral ulceration).

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2009.266

ALCOHOL

Litigation and alcohol policy: lessons from the US Tobacco Wars

Mosher JF. *Addiction* 2009; 104: 27–33

Controlling the alcohol industry by adopting similar approaches that curbed tobacco use.

This paper focuses on US litigation and, although not directly applicable to UK and EU laws, is revealing. Both the tobacco and alcohol industry have adopted 'similar youth-orientated marketing strategies'. Young people are being introduced to alcohol using alcopops. However, this strategy of the 'purveyors of addictive products' may be their soft underbelly and could form a basis for international efforts to curb alcohol abuse. In addition, it is suggested that there may be a common approach to control the sale of alcopops across the different territorial jurisdictions through the introduction of higher taxes and collection of back taxes. However, this should be tempered by the observation that litigation is a 'blunt instrument that should not be pursued in isolation'.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2009.267

ALCOHOL-CONTAINING MOUTHWASHES

The role of alcohol in oral carcinogenesis with particular reference to alcohol-containing mouthwashes

McCullough MJ, Farah CS. *Aust Dent J* 2008; 53: 302–305

'...it is inadvisable for oral healthcare professionals to recommend the long-term use of alcohol-containing mouthwashes'.

In this literature review, the authors state 'oral cancer represents approximately 5% of all malignant lesions' and the 'five-year survival rate remains around 50%'. The risk of developing oral cancer is about 50 fold greater in heavy smokers and drinkers. Although the past literature has been somewhat equivocal in associating alcohol-containing mouthwashes with oral cancer, this review cites a recent international, multicentre, case control study comprising 3,210 patients with head and neck cancer and 2,752 controls. It was reported that 'the use of an alcoholic (alcohol-containing) mouthwash twice daily increased the chance of acquiring cancer (of the oral cavity, pharynx and larynx only) by over nine times for current smokers, over five times for those who drank alcohol and almost five times for those who never drank alcohol'.

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