

Dental news

The BDJ News section accepts items that include general news, latest research and diary events that interest our readers. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible.

Please direct your correspondence to the News Editor, Arveen Bajaj at the BDJ, The Macmillan Building, 4 Crinan Street, London N1 9XW or by email to a.bajaj@nature.com

DENTISTRY'S FUTURE DEBATED

Dental industry figures gathered to discuss the industry recently at a Westminster Health Forum keynote seminar entitled The Future of Dentistry. The forum took place in the lead up to Professor Jimmy Steele's review into NHS dentistry in England due in mid-June

It examined issues around access to NHS treatment, tackling inequalities nationwide, and the changing role of dentists. The speakers called for the government to engage more closely with the profession.

The BDA's Executive Board Chair Susie Sanderson said in her keynote speech that the industry needed to learn from the problems facing dentistry in England as a result of the contract introduced in 2006.

She said, 'New systems will always need monitoring but given the failure to test key parts of the reform and the high profile of criticisms from many sectors, I think this review is timely and worthwhile. Jimmy Steele's review of the dentistry system gives an opportunity to learn the lessons and let's hope it is a genuine step forward.'

She added, 'All stakeholders have used access numbers over the last three years to demonstrate the failure of the new contract, but we still don't have a definition of access which lends anything to the drive to improve oral health in our communities and it is time to look at what the term access actually means. I believe that there are a few things that this review must achieve. The UDA must be scrapped as the major currency by which dentist's activity is measured as it does not encourage modern dentistry.'

Derek Watson, Chief Executive of the Dental Practitioners Association

focused on engagement between the government and the profession. Referring to access to dentistry, he said, 'The current government's approach to the problem we have is to devolve the management of the service to the regions, giving it an element of plausible deniability in an attempt to distance itself from supply problems. Dentistry, or the lack of it, however, has proved to be surprisingly resilient to cause for complaint, frequently coming at the top of public dissatisfaction poles where it jostles with MRSA for the top spot.'

'Dentistry has gone from the responsibility of the Minister to a now Parliamentary Under Secretary. In political popularity, it is second only to Northern Ireland in terms of brief. In my opinion, this is a governance problem.'

Professor Richard Watt, Professor and Honorary Consultant of Dental Public Health, University College London said that there was no perfect system of remuneration of dentists.

'We have tried different systems in this country, around the world different systems have been tried, no system will be satisfactory to the three stakeholders, the public, the profession or the government. What we need is a system that is a compromise and fits the modern agenda, reflects the need of the population, the epidemiology of a population in an evidence-based fashion,' he said.

He called for tests and pilots of different models of care, stating that one system would not fit all. 'I think what we need is a pluralistic system of delivery of dental services. For some, registration may be important, for others, continuity of care or walk in services, more flexible types of services, delivered in



BDA's Executive Board Chair Susie Sanderson spoke at the event

different settings opening at different times. The models of care that we need to deliver need to be much broader and more imaginative in vision.

The forum was rounded up by Lord Colwyn, member of the Science and Technology Select Committee, who concluded, 'It is obvious to me that the new contract has really failed to meet the government's own criteria for success. The UDA is an unsatisfactory method of measuring dental activity and of monitoring of contract performance. It relates to consumption of time and resources and based on an out-dated model of dental care. I believe the UDA system should go, replaced by perhaps a contractual system that offers registration, capitalisation and utilises a skills mix approach.'



INTERNATIONAL PHOTO CONTEST LAUNCHED

Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programs (WOHP) and the FDI World Dental Federation have joined forces to host the second consecutive FDI & Wrigley Photographic Award.

The international photo contest offers dental professionals a chance to submit photos that capture 'what makes them smile' via a dedicated web site, www.PhotoAward.org. For each entry received, entrants have the chance to win a trip to an upcoming FDI World Dental Congress and WOHP will donate up to \$25,000 to the FDI's World Dental Development Fund (WDDF), which supports oral health education and projects worldwide.

This year's contest, which closes 8 July 2009, will recognize six regional

winners, one each from Africa, Asia Pacific & Oceania, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North America, who will each receive a gift voucher for \$1,000 (or equivalent in British Pounds or Euros) to spend on the latest photographic equipment, a year's subscription to the *International Dental Journal* and a year's supply of Wrigley's sugar-free gum.

From the six regional winners, a grand prize winner will be awarded a VIP all expense-paid trip to their choice of either the 2009 FDI Annual World Dental Congress in Singapore (2-5 September 2009) or the 2010 FDI Annual World Dental Congress in Brazil (2-5 September 2010). Visit www.PhotoAward.org/Terms for full terms and conditions.

LINK FOUND BETWEEN GUM DISEASE AND HEART ATTACK

Scientists in Germany have discovered a gene that links periodontitis and increased risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and have urged dentists to make sure they diagnose and treat cases of periodontitis as early as possible to minimise the risk of heart disease.

Dr Arne Schaefer, of the Institute for Clinical Molecular Biology at the University of Kiel, and colleagues found a gene on chromosome 9 whose variant is shared between gum and heart disease. A genetic locus on chromosome 9p21.3 was already known to be associated with myocardial infarction (heart attack), so they decided to study it in two groups of patients: 151 patients with aggressive early stage periodontitis, and 1,097 patients with CHD who had already had a heart attack.

Dr Schaefer said that the genetic variation associated with the clinical pictures of both diseases was identical and the researchers confirmed the link by studying two other groups: one of 1,100 CHD patients and another of 180 periodontitis patients.

'We found that the genetic risk variant is located in a genetic region that codes for an antisense DNA called ANRIL', said Dr Schaefer. 'Because of its association with CHD, we think that periodon-

titis should be taken very seriously by dentists and diagnosed and treated as early as possible', he cautioned.

Men are more likely to suffer from CHD and periodontitis and the two diseases share similar risk factors such as smoking, diabetes and obesity. An imbalanced immune reaction and chronic inflammation are also features of both diseases, and previous studies have suggested that the presence of specific bacteria in periodontal pockets might explain the relationship between periodontal

disease and acute coronary syndrome.

According to Dr Schaefer, the study confirms the genetic link hinted at by these factors. He commented, 'We hope that our findings will make it easier to diagnose the disease at an early stage, and that in future a greater insight into the specific pathophysiology might open the way to effective treatment before the disease can take hold.'

The findings were presented to the annual conference of the European Society of Human Genetics in Vienna in May.



CONSERVATIVES PUBLISH PLANS TO REFORM NHS DENTISTRY

Fining patients for missing dental appointments is one of the proposals published by the Conservative Party, which has outlined its reforms to NHS dentistry. The party claims its proposals would cut down on wasted appointments and increase access to dental care.

The proposals include reforming dentists' contracts to provide incentives to provide preventive care, and plans to spend £17 million to allow all five-year-old schoolchildren an oral health check-up. They would also remove barriers to setting up and selling new practices by looking at long-term deals to help dental professionals to buy into NHS dentistry, and introduce five-year tie-ins to the NHS for taxpayer-trained dentists, so that those who take public bursaries for dental training would have to do at least five years' work for the NHS in return.

The Tories would also open up commissioning to allow a wider range of professionals, such as hygienists and oral health educators, to be used to support improvements in NHS dentistry. Each NHS dentist would have a list of patients for whom they are responsible under plans to have people register with a practice, and the number of patients on the list would form the means by which dentists would be paid, replacing the current fixed treatment quotas.

John Milne, Chair of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee, said that the dental contract had created significant problems for dentists and patients alike. 'In seeking to address those problems it will be important to afford access to dentists to all and ensure that dentists can provide modern, preventive care. Also vital is engagement with the profession in developing the detail of these proposals

and properly testing new arrangements before they are implemented. The BDA looks forward to seeing those details and discussing them further.'

However, the British Dental Health Foundation called into question the proposal for free check-ups in primary schools, saying that the money would be better spent on effective preventative measures.

Foundation chief executive Dr Nigel Carter said, 'Compulsory school screenings are simply a waste of money when there are far more effective measures available. The evidence is overwhelming that school dental check-ups are not effective. Indeed, far from improving pupils' oral health they have been shown to increase existing disparities.' The Foundation believes the budget would be best spent on water fluoridation and programmes in schools for the application of fluoride varnishes and supervised brushing.

DENTIST HONOURED IN ASIAN WOMEN AWARDS

Cosmetic dentist Dr Sunita Verma was named Professional of the Year at the Asian Women of Achievement Awards in London recently.

Dr Verma founded Sparkle Dental Boutique, a multi award-winning private practice in west London which helps reconstruct people's lives after trauma.

Now in their 10th year, the Asian Women of Achievement Awards, held in association with Lloyds TSB, celebrate the contribution of Asian women to British life in the media, business, the arts, politics and the voluntary sector.

The judges, chaired by British Red Cross chief executive Sir Nicholas Young, said this year's winners were some of the most impressive and inspiring individuals ever to be honoured in the programme's 10-year history.

They said Dr Verma was 'an inspiring role model' who has achieved significant success through her 'passion, commitment and risk-taking', rather than a professional or entrepreneurial background. They also praised her as a 'beacon for young girls' thanks to her 'anyone can do it' attitude.

The ceremony was attended by Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, patron Cherie Blair, Nick Clegg MP, actress Meera Syal, James Caan, entrepreneur and star of TV's *Dragon's Den*, The Rt Hon Tessa

Jowell MP, chairman of the judges and chief executive of the British Red Cross Sir Nicholas Young, The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, Baroness Kennedy QC, Baroness Greenfield and Caroline Spelman MP. For information on the awards visit www.awaawards.com.



DIARY

JULY

10th Annual Rural Dental Conference

Date: 3 July 2009

Venue: Gregynog Hall, Wales

Tel: 01686 650800

FGDP(UK) Implementation of the Dentists with Special Interests Scheme

Date: 3 July 2009

Venue: BMA House, London

Tel: 020 7869 6772

Email: fgdp-education@rcseng.ac.uk

FDI Rio Caries Conference

Date: 15-17 July 2009

Venue: Rio Centro Exhibition and Convention Centre, Brazil

www.fdiworldental.org

SEPTEMBER

2009 FDI Annual World Dental Congress

Date: 2-5 September 2009

Venue: Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre

Email: congress@fdiworldental.org

www.fdiworldental.org

Denplan National Conference

Date: 11-13 September 2009

Venue: Marriott Forrester of Arden Hotel, Warwickshire

Email: events@denplan.co.uk

www.denplan.co.uk

OCTOBER

2nd Annual European Congress on Anti-Aging & Aesthetic Medicine (ECAAM)

Date: 5-17 October 2009

Venue: Congress Centre, Mainz, Frankfurt

Email: ssinger@tarsus.co.uk

www.anti-agingevents.com/europe

American Society of Human Genetics: Society of Craniofacial Genetics 32nd Annual Meeting and Symposium

Date: 20 October 2009

Venue: Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

www.craniofacialgenetics.org

5th SOLA Laser Congress – International Society for Oral Laser Applications

Date: 22-25 October 2009

Venue: Vienna, Austria

www.sola-int.org

DENTAL NEGLECT FOCUS

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) has published a new policy document on dental neglect in children. *British Society of Paediatric Dentistry: a policy document on dental neglect in children* is the Society's response to recent concerns that health professionals do not do enough to protect neglected children and to promote the welfare of those at risk.

Aimed at any dentist or dental care professional who provides care for children, the Society say the document will also be useful for other health professionals who may need to assess a child's dental health in the context of their general health.

The document gives guidance on how the dental team should respond to suspected neglect, recommendations are made for improvements in inter-agency working, service organisation and training and the need for further research in the field is highlighted.

The newly proposed definition of dental neglect, 'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic oral health needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's oral or general health or development,' acknowledges that dental neglect may occur in isolation or may be an indicator of a wider picture of neglect and abuse and the Society says it is important that dental professionals know what to do in both situations.

Deborah Franklin, who chairs the Paediatric Dentistry Policy and Clinical Effectiveness Committee which commis-

sioned the work, said 'Many dentists have done child protection training but still find it difficult to put into practice what they have learned, particularly when they see children with severe untreated dental caries. We hope that this policy document will help them respond effectively when they suspect neglect.'

Paediatrician Peter Sidebotham of the University of Warwick, who co-authored the document said, 'I am impressed by how much dentists already do to educate and support parents. This is a complex area and the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable care are not always clear. I would encourage dentists, where they have concerns about a child's dental care, perhaps as a result of missed appointments or where they recognise potential markers of neglect, to seek advice from other health professionals experienced in child protection and, if necessary, to make a child protection referral.'

The authors acknowledge that dental team involvement with safeguarding children is in its infancy. Jenny Harris, Specialist in Paediatric Dentistry and lead author of the policy document said, 'These recommendations should be viewed as a starting point. They are presented with the aim of stimulating debate, particularly to encourage discussion with our medical and nursing colleagues. In time we hope that this will enhance care for vulnerable children.' To read the document visit www.bspd.co.uk/publications.html.



Pictured (L to R): Jenny Harris, Dr Peter Sidebotham, Richard Balmer