

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.

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JAW SIZE DECREASES WITH AGE

A study that followed a cohort of dentists over 40 years has shown that the size of our jaws decreases with age.¹

The study, from the Faculty of Dentistry at Malmö University in Sweden, started in 1949. Plaster moulds were made of the jaws of dental students, who were then in their twenties. Ten years later the procedure was repeated, and in 1989, 40 years after the first moulds, a final round was performed. On that occasion the researchers were in touch with 18 of the original 30 participants.

'We found that over these 40 years there was less and less room for teeth in the jaw,' said Lars

Bondemark, professor of orthodontics, who analysed the material together with his colleague Maria Nilner, professor of clinical bite physiology.

This crowdedness comes from shrinkage of the jaw, primarily the lower jaw, both in length and width. While this is only a matter of a few millimetres, it is enough to crowd the front teeth.

'We can also eliminate wisdom teeth as the cause, because even people who have no wisdom teeth have crowded front teeth,' said Professor Bondemark.

How much the jaw shrinks is individual, but for some patients the changes are sufficiently great for them to perceive that something is happening to their bite.

Professor Bondemark maintains that dentists need to take into consideration the continuous shrinking of the jaws when they plan to perform major bite constructions on their patients. 'We're working against nature, and it's hard to construct something that is completely stable.'

Why the jaws change throughout life is not known, but the magnitude of the change is probably determined by both hereditary and anatomical factors, including what the patient's bite looks like.

1. Tsiopas N, Nilner M, Bondemark L, Bjerklín K. A 40 years follow-up of dental arch dimensions and incisor irregularity in adults. *Eur J Orthod* 2011 [Epub ahead of print].



HIV CONSULTATION WELCOMED

Dental Protection has welcomed the announcement from the Department of Health that there will be a public consultation about the regulation of healthcare workers with HIV that currently prevents some members of the dental profession from working normally. The existing regulations are more than two decades old and do not take into account the pharmaceutical advances in controlling the infectivity of the retrovirus. Nor do they recognise the current standards of audited infection control that all dental practices are expected to achieve.

'The introduction of effective antiretroviral therapy in the 1990s combined with the absence of any proven transmission in the dental setting makes it totally unfair to continue to force members of the dental team to quit their chosen profession,' said Kevin Lewis, Dental Director.

The British Dental Association (BDA) have also welcomed this announcement and will be submitting a formal response to the Department of Health. Please visit www.bda.org for the BDA's comments.

WHY NOT BOOK ON BOXING DAY?

Booking is now open for the 2012 British Dental Conference and Exhibition: 'Your profession, your event'. Taking place in Manchester from 26-28 April, highlights look set to include eminent pharmacologist and brain scientist Professor Susan Greenfield as keynote speaker, exploring the relationship between science and business.

In 2012 new features will include a demonstration theatre and cross-industry learning sessions led by experts from other fields. The Coalition Government's dentistry Minister, Earl Howe, has been invited to share the latest news on the reform of dentistry in England with delegates.

A free one-day conference ticket is on offer to all BDA members and in addition, dentists who purchase a two or three-day ticket can register a dental care professional (DCP) free of charge. Any bookings made before 4 February 2012 qualify for an early booking price.

www.bda.org/conference