

# 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.

## SALIVARY SUBSTITUTES

### Stimulating the discussion on saliva substitutes: a clinical perspective

Dost F, Farah CS. *Aust Dent J* 2013; 58: 11–17

**'There is no strong evidence that any topical therapy is effective to relieve the symptoms of dry mouth'. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2011; (12): CD008934.**

Notwithstanding this, care of patients with this most distressing condition is more than forest plots. In this Australian perspective on salivary substitutes, those with mild xerostomia may benefit from 1) frequent sipping of water, 2) olive oil, that has possible anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties, and 3) milk that contain milk salts. Biotène™ products (of note, these have a low pH and poor taste), OralSeven™ products (these contain *Aloe vera*) and bioXtra® products, all contain LP3 protein enzyme system that comprise lactoferrin, lysozyme and lactoperoxidase. Pilocarpine has side-effects of excessive sweating and frequent urination, and is contraindicated for those with cardiovascular and pulmonary disease. Chewing gum, a therapy advocated in the above Cochrane Review, is useful for those with residual salivary capacity.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2013.457

## CARCINOGENESIS IN NON-SMOKERS

### Human papillomavirus and oral disease – emerging evidence: a review

Prabhu SR, Wilson DF. *Aust Dent J* 2013; 58: 2–10

**There is a putative relationship between HPV-16 and oral cancers in younger people who have had little exposure to tobacco smoking and alcohol.**

It is now over 40 years since HPV was first muted as a causative agent for oral squamous cell papillomas. Low risk HPV types are associated with these wart-like lesions. High risk types, that comprise one third of the 120 types of HPV isolated, have been linked with anogenital cancers. Both HPV-16 and 18 may have a 'hit and run' oncogenic mechanism. It is equivocal as to whether or not herpes simplex virus (HSV-2) acts as a co-factor in HPV carcinogenesis. In addition to the association between HPV and carcinogenesis in younger people, there is emerging evidence that 'HPV virus may modulate the process of carcinogenesis in some tobacco and alcohol induced oropharyngeal cancers' particularly those located at the base of the tongue and tonsillar region.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2013.459

## IMPROVING FUNCTION

### A preliminary investigation into the use of denture adhesives combined with dietary advice to improve diets in complete denture wearers

Bartlett DW, Maggio B *et al. J Dent* 2013; 41:143–147

**'...denture adhesive and simple dietary advice...produced significant improvements...' although causality could not be claimed.**

Although counter-intuitive, some investigators report that mandibular implant-supported overdentures, with their superior function, do not result in an improved diet. The investigators in this study, which recruited 35 'experienced dentures wearers', found a combination of the use of denture fixative (understood to be zinc-free but not stated) and dietary advice allowed subjects a better 'ability to bite ( $p = 0.0175$ ) and chew ( $p = 0.0074$ ) a range of foods.' There was also an improvement in the 'social impact of oral disorders' as measured using OHIP Edent. As there was no control group, it was not possible to show if these outcomes were as a consequence of the interventions.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2013.458

## ACCEPTED BUT IS IT ACCEPTABLE?

### Placebo use in the United Kingdom: results from a national survey of primary care practitioners

Howick J, Bishop FL *et al. PLoS ONE* 2013; 18: e58247.

doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0058247

#### Ethical implications of using placebos.

How often does a dentist prescribe a mouthwash for ambiguous symptoms (impure placebo), or even carry out a 'sham' adjustment of a removable prosthesis (pure placebo)? Also described in this paper is a nocebo. Merriam-Wester states a nocebo is a harmless intervention that is nevertheless associated with 'adverse effects due to negative expectations'. An example would be the provision of a stabilisation splint for tinnitus. In this study, 783 UK general medical practitioners (from 1,715 invited) completed a web-based questionnaire. Seventy-seven percent of practitioners used impure placebos and 1% used pure placebos, at least once a week. However when a placebo is used, invariably the patient is not afforded the moral imperative and legal right to give real consent. The implications of the final sentence 'Further investigations are warranted to develop ethical and cost-effective placebos' require careful examination.

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