

FROM THE ARCHIVE

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Doesn't it just feel wrong that once upon a time smoking was socially acceptable? Here we dig into the archive to find out what the profession thought about the habit.

BDJ Vol 135 – 20th November 1973

Health Education and the Profession

SIR,—The President of the B.D.A., Professor F. E. Lawton, in his address at the Annual Conference in June (B.D.J., June 19) urged the profession to change its attitude and no longer to be content to treat established disease so that 'the president another 25 years from now would be able to report an increasing rate of improvement in dental health and a genuine improvement in the status of the dental profession as one no longer primarily concerned with repair but as a true member and perhaps leader of the health professions.'

Fluoridation of water is recommended as is the change of dietary habits. At the same time, the attitude of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in zero-rating sweets for VAT is deprecated. All this is necessary for the prevention of dental disease which though inconvenient and painful is not directly lethal.

Yet, in the booklet 'The Seven Ages of the British Dental Association' the Development Fund Campaign Director is offering as souvenir gifts in exchange for a covenant, cigarette lighters inscribed with the B.D.A. arms. These will be used in smoking—a habit that may cause chronic bronchitis, resulting in a respiratory cripple with many man-hours lost off work and lung cancer, a killer. Surely, the dental profession would be a better leader of the health professions in the important preventive field, if its representative Association were not seen actively to encourage the habit of smoking.

Liverpool.

E. T. S. SMITH.

BDJ Vol 135 – 4th December 1973

Health Education and the Profession

SIR,—I have just read the letter in the B.D.J., dated November 20 in which the writer who, I am informed, is neither a member of the B.D.A. nor, indeed, of our profession, denigrates our campaign for the Development Fund by suggesting that we encourage smoking.

Those members of the B.D.A. who support the campaign are offered a choice of a ball-point pen or a gas lighter. To have such a lighter handy is highly desirable, if not essential, for a dentist who has repeatedly to light and relight the small Bunsen burner he uses in his surgery or the gas heaters and appliances of many sorts in his laboratory. By what quirk can anyone suggest that the carrying of a lighter predisposes to the smoking habit? Would the writer of the letter ban the use of lighters or even matches in our daily lives because they (in his words) 'actively encourage the smoking habit'?

The excellent booklet 'The Seven Ages of the British Dental Association' does not contain the word 'cigarette' which your correspondent has deliberately inserted in his letter. It is well known that the B.D.A. has openly supported the medical profession both in the Central Health Services Council and elsewhere in such efforts as they have made to control it.

At least the writing of this letter has given me a further opportunity of thanking most warmly all the subscribers to the B.D.A. Trust Fund in the year in which we have passed the first £100,000. The fund now largely supports the Library and Museum and, as its income grows, it can initiate and support dental health and other campaigns for the benefit of the public.

My principal thanks are due to the Director of the Development Fund Campaign, Mr Sam Coplans, who has been almost entirely responsible for the first £100,000 and who has started well on raising the second £100,000.

Hythe, Kent.

W. PEBLES,
Chairman of Committee,
British Dental Association Trust Fund.

'For myself I would not go to a dentists' meeting unless there was a bar and I could smoke in it'

BDJ Vol 136 – 1st January 1974

Health Education and the Profession

SIR,—Your correspondent, Dr E. T. S. Smith (B.D.J., November 20), is quixotic; though seemingly aware of the existence of the real dangers, he tilts his lance(t) at the imaginary ones, harmless and indeed positively useful, as the Chairman of the Committee of the B.D.A. Trust Fund points out in his reply (B.D.J., December 4). May I, the alleged misdemeanant, add a few words?

Not only does the word cigarette not appear (intentionally, let it be said) in the text of the 'Seven Ages of the British Dental Association,' but it is also wholly absent (as, too, is any allusion to smoking) from the catalogues, advertising and other publicity matter put out by the manufacturers concerned. Albeit, many smokers find the pocket lighter less cumbersome than the match and share the appeal they have for us non-smokers.

I feel sure your correspondent has not overlooked the companion offer of the equally well-known ballpen as an alternative souvenir. I cannot bring myself to believe that (by the same token) I am exposing myself to further censorious attack in that I am insidiously seeking to corrupt and deprave my fellow members of the Association (to whom the circulation of the 'Seven Ages' was restricted, as are all my appeals) by placing in their hands an 'offensive weapon' for the purpose of executing forgeries, issuing dud cheques, or indulging in *graffiti* and poison-pen activities.

However, I am more than grateful that such *naïveté* provides me with the opportunity, once again, to draw members' attention to page 29 *et seq* of the 'Seven Ages.'

S. H. COPLANS,
Hon Director,
Development Fund Campaign,
British Dental Association,
London, W.1.

BDJ Vol 136 – 15th January 1974

Smoking and Health

SIR,—Smoking is a dear, dirty and dangerous habit; one in 9 of all smokers finally die from lung cancer caused by this pernicious practice (R.C.P., 1961). In this country alone this means 35,000 lives are needlessly lost each year. For those who are fortunate enough to escape the fatality of a carcinoma of the lung there remains the prospect of chronic bronchitis, emphysema and a marked predisposition to coronary artery disease.

Dentists hold a unique position in the health team in that they routinely treat fit, healthy patients; let us use this position to practise preventive medicine by actively encouraging people to give up cigarette smoking. In these days when the moral responsibility of preventing disease lies very heavily upon the shoulders of both the medical and dental professions, we must be prepared to work for this aim. This we must do not only in our own field, but by setting an example, demonstrate to our medical colleagues just how much we believe in the concept of 'keeping the healthy healthy.' Smoking is undoubtedly the greatest single health hazard of our time and I appeal to members of our profession to try to dissuade members of the public from smoking and so help to eradicate this lethal habit.

Edinburgh.

PETER HURST.

REFERENCE
Royal College of Physicians (1961) Smoking and Health, p. 46. London.

BDJ Vol 136 – 5th February 1974

Smoking and Health

SIR,—The letter from Mr Peter Hurst makes me so annoyed (B.D.J., January 15). People of his ilk are ever prepared to foist their beliefs on others. He makes a few general observations like smoking is 'a dear, dirty and dangerous habit.' Undoubtedly, and in reply I would say that in spite of '1 in 9 of all smokers finally die from lung cancer . . . 9 out of 9 die of something. Let us preserve an open mind in these matters.

Alcohol can result in a far quicker and equally unpleasant death—but one finds a bar wherever one goes. For myself I would not go to a dentists' meeting unless there was a bar and I could smoke. I hate to think what the revenue position of this country would be if all depraved smokers and drinkers suddenly gave up their pernicious habits. Let those who wish to smoke and drink do so and those who write to the Journal stick to the facts, because I do not think that the statement, 'Smoking is undoubtedly the greatest single health hazard . . .' can be proven.

Finally, and I hesitate to draw attention to this fact, dear old Reggie Course whose obituary at the age of 80 is in the same Journal as Mr Hurst's letter, and to whom thousands of dentists, including myself, owe their qualifying, was a great smoker.

Walsall, Staffs.

STANLEY TINKLER.

'Smoking is a dear, dirty and dangerous habit'

BDJ Vol 136 – 19th March 1974

Smoking and Health

SIR,—Mr Stanley Tinkler is so annoyed to have Mr Peter Hurst and people of his ilk 'foist' their beliefs on others (B.D.J., February 5); it is germane to the subject matter to quote the O.E.D. definition of foist: 'To put forth fraudulently, to introduce surreptitiously or unwarrantably, to cheat, to palm off.' Now this definition at once stamps your correspondent's remarks as impolite and completely inaccurate as it is quite impossible to apply the word foist to anything that Mr Hurst says.

The platitude that 9 out of 9 die of something calls for no comment and the statement that 'alcohol can result in a far quicker and equally unpleasant death—but one in a far quicker and equally unpleasant death' is irrelevant. Mr Tinkler finds a bar wherever one goes' is irrelevant. Mr Tinkler then goes on to inform us that he personally would not then go on to inform us that he personally would not then go to a dental meeting unless there was a bar and he go to a dental meeting to take the chair could smoke: I have been privileged to take the chair at many academic meetings over the years and in many cases smoking has been banned. Mr Tinkler may well have to look carefully into the regulations if he wishes to attend lectures in the metropolis. The question concerning loss of revenue is really out of context here and may be dismissed.

Your correspondent would not save one unfortunate victim from carcinoma because he believes the facts are not proven; most of us believe otherwise and the death of a close friend, tragic though it may be, serves to strengthen this conviction and our desire to educate others to escape a similar fate.

One can only applaud Mr Tinkler's hesitancy in dragging 'dear old Reggie Course' into the fray; what a pity he did not refrain altogether, but the surefire he draws from this one particular case must surely constitute a logician's nightmare! *Ab uno disce omnes!*

Haisham, Sussex.

S. ROY SMITH.