

Brexism and bruxism

Recent research from a study in the City of London has indicated that Brexism may be causing an increase in bruxism.¹ Researchers studied a convenience sample of workers in the financial field and compared them with politicians, using those who abstained in the EU Referendum as a control group. Only two subjects dropped out and no returning officers were harmed in the course of the study.

Outcome measures were levels of bruxism before 23 June (polling day) and three months later, as well as detectable tooth wear on posterior teeth. Results showed that financial workers were most likely to have suffered additional bruxism post-Brexit with those in currency exchange suffering statistically significant enamel loss. Politicians, on the other hand, showed marginally less stress than before the vote, although anecdotally some additional loss of tooth surface tissue was noted due to acid attack from alleged increased wine consumption.

Although the authors point out that it is too early to draw definite conclusions and that more research is needed, ironically they do note in the discussion section of the paper that the main difference between Brexism and bruxism is an E and a U.

1. Clench M, Tubule-Pressure P. Bruxism and Brexism; a study of future markers and markets. *J Dent Politics* 2016; **23**: 402-408.

Tooth fairies hit by recession

In the financial turmoil of the last few years scant attention has been given to the welfare of tooth fairies, so claims their professional association, the Society of Tooth Fairies (STF). Writing in the journal *Nocturnal Operatives*, current STF President, Featherdown Diver (winner of the 2016 Tinkerbell Award for Outstanding Contribution to Pillow Lifting Dexterity) points out the little known fact that the trade-in value of teeth received by her members is controlled by the commodity market based on the value left under the pillow by parents. As that cash value falls so does the amount received per tooth on the FTE (Fairy Tooth Exchange).

The average amount left for children plummeted from an all-time high in early 2008 of an average of £2.05 to a low in 2016 (most recent figures available from London Hard Tissue Commodity Exchange Regulator) of £1.56. This represents not just a fall of 24% but something approaching 35% in real terms when set against cost of living.

Featherdown continued, 'throughout this period costs have also risen as parents have been increasingly security conscious. This has meant our members have had to invest in more sophisticated anti-detection systems, not to mention the increased cost of flying and wing maintenance.' Add to this the weighting effect of fewer extractions in the higher socio-economic groups where tooth fairy deposits are usually greatest and life becomes hard for the night-time calcific collectors.

Asked if she thought that the deficit was likely to lead to her members quitting the profession for alternative jobs, the President pointed out that few were trained for any other positions and those who had tried employment such as toenail recycling had soon returned to the tooth world. In a closing plea to parents to up the stakes she asked for consideration for the unseen workforce who make such a difference to gappy young lives.

Sugar to be stamped out of children's books

At a landmark event held earlier this month at the British Library in London, the chief executives of the top children's book publishers in the world unanimously agreed to reissue their children's books with new titles and content in support of the fight against childhood obesity and tooth decay.

Roald Dahl's seminal *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* will become *Charlie and the Chickpea Factory*, with factory owner Mr Wonka taking hummus-devotee Charlie on a voyage down a river of tahini to sample Moroccan, thick, smooth and extra garlic versions of the chickpea dip.

Children's classic *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* will keep its title, but the chocolate cake, ice cream, lollipop and cupcake the insect devours on his culinary journey will be replaced by oatcakes, porridge, carrot sticks and a piece of sugar-free gum.

Winnie the Pooh's endless consumption of hunny [sic], which is not only full of sugar but contraindicated for babies under the age of one due to the possible presence of a spore of *Clostridium botulinum* which can cause food poisoning, will be replaced by a high fruit content spread eaten as part of a well-balanced diet and only at mealtimes.

The Famous Five's 'lashings' of ginger beer will be replaced by sparkling water; Roger Hargreaves' rotund Mr. Greedy will be replaced by a svelte Mr. Sugar Free; and a new addition to the Little Miss series will be Little Miss Fluoride, a Blackpool resident who brushes her teeth twice a day, drinks fluoridated milk and joins a campaign supporting water fluoridation in her area.

Dr Nicholas Crater MBE, Chief Executive of the Clean Mouth Foundation, welcomed the announcement on children's books and said: 'Discontinuing the endorsement of high sugar products in children's literature spells good news for generations of our children.'

Spokesperson for the British Society of Children with Healthy Teeth (BSCHT), Carol Sevens, said: 'Earlier this year BSCHT called for strong and decisive leadership to address inequalities in oral health once and for all. While we are still waiting for the Government to take appropriate action beyond the proposed sugar tax, we applaud these measures taken by publishers of books that capture our children's imagination and influence their dietary choices.'

It is rumoured the English Dental Association (EDA) plans to hold a sugary book amnesty outside its headquarters on Walpole Street early in 2017, with the books being recycled into dental public health leaflets.



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