BDA survey shows most dentists want to leave NHS

By DTI

LONDON, UK. New doubt has been cast on the future of NHS dental care, as a recent survey issued by the British Dental Association (BDA) has found that the majority of dentists currently working in the service intend to leave it within the next five years. The results further showed that one in two dentists under 35 see no future for themselves in the NHS.

Instead, that demographic is now considering increasing the private work they do, working in private practice or moving abroad. Buying a practice is no longer considered a viable option, according to the poll, as only 16 per cent of those surveyed thought they would be able to own a practice in the next five years.

The worrying figures come after statistics from NHS Digital showed that the income of dentists in England and Wales has decreased by almost 35 per cent over the last decade. According to the BDA, the government is mainly to blame, as commitments to overhaul the controversial 2006 dental contract have not been honoured.

“The dental contract has reduced our patients to a line in a spreadsheet. This conveyor belt model of care has decisively failed to benefit our patients and the young dentists on whom the future of the service depends,” said Chair of the BDA’s Young Dentists Committee Dr Harman Chahal. “Young NHS dentists are being asked to make impossible choices. They are offered no reward for going above and beyond, just the constant threat of penalties for not hitting government targets.”

Chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee Dr Henrik Overgaard-Nielsen added that, while young dentists remain the backbone of the dental workforce, government has made NHS high-street practice so unattractive that the next generation is now looking to the exit.

“Practices across the UK are already reporting major recruitment problems. This is a crisis made in Westminster, and Westminster must respond,” he urged.

Report: Policymakers given steps to act against dental caries

By DTI

LONDON, UK. A new report, published last week by the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF) and the Policy Institute at King’s College London in the UK, has highlighted the importance of demonstrating to policymakers the economic benefits of tackling the high rate of dental caries and gaining their commitment to the fight against the disease. The authors have further proposed key steps to speed up the process towards a cavity-free world.

The report is the product of discussions that took place at a Policy Lab meeting in June. This session for the first time brought together individuals from a range of different backgrounds—dentists, economists, public health officials, policy advisers, educators and psychologists—to provide new perspectives on the continuing problem of dental caries.

While the science on preventing the disease and stopping early-stage caries progression is already well understood, efforts to apply it have so far fallen short, the report’s experts emphasised. They estimate that the potential economic and health benefits of a cavity-free world are significant, especially considering that caries has common risk factors with other non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Reducing the risk factors associated with caries could thereby also help improve health more generally and reduce the financial costs arising from other conditions, they explained.

To have policymakers actively engaged in the fight against the disease, systematic economic and comprehensive clinical data must be collected, the report urged. In addition, increased efforts should be made to accelerate the move towards a greater focus on preventative dental care. To this end, the authors proposed creating new remuneration systems for dentists to ensure that caries prevention and control are properly rewarded, as well as promoting efforts to encourage behaviour change in the public and implementing incentives for the industry to adopt more socially responsible agendas, among other measures.

Concerning the proposal to revise dental remuneration systems, ACFF Global Chairman Dr Nigel Pitts told Dental Tribune Online: “Current payment systems do not typically pay dentists to ‘do prevention’ and there is no financial incentive for dentists to spend time and resources on preventatively oriented care pathways. In order to see progress, this needs to change.”

In addition, Pitts highlighted the importance of closer collaboration between dental and medical practitioners. “Maximising the effectiveness of caries preventative caries management will increasingly draw on a multidisciplined workforce of teams made up of …”
“Too many sweets, eh?”

GDC: First results of fitness to practise analysis published

By DTI

LONDON, UK: Dentists who are male and have an Asian background are more likely to be investigated by the General Dental Council (GDC), an independent analysis of the regulator’s fitness to practise (FtP) data has suggested. It also found that foreign dentists who registered by taking the Overseas Registration Exam were less likely to be involved in an FtP case than their counterparts from the European Economic Area region.

In fact, dentists from that area were over-represented in FtP proceedings, according to the data.

The analysis commissioned by the GDC is the first to examine data from its FtP process in depth and is part of the organisation’s ongoing efforts to reform dental regulation. Although the findings do not necessarily reflect the actual situation owing to gaps in the information-gathering process, the regulator said it is planning to share them with its partners in order to help transform internal processes and policies, like the development of new materials to ease the transition of dentists who were trained abroad into UK dentistry.

They will also be used for a state of the nation report that is anticipated to be released in 2019, the GDC added.

According to the Professional Standards Authority, the regulator opened 250 cases in 2015/2016 that met FtP criteria.

“This is a major step towards improving our use of data and intelligence to inform upstream regulation initiatives—to improve patient protection, ensure the public maintains confidence in dental services and to better support professionals,” explained the GDC’s Executive Director of Fitness to Practise, Jonathan Pitts.

“Too many sweets, eh?”

Global Burden of Disease study

Untreated caries in children’s teeth was the tenth most prevalent condition among all participants evaluated in the 2016 Lancet Global Burden of Disease study. Untreated dental caries in permanent teeth affects 2.4 billion people and was the most prevalent condition across all populations. However, the health of the public and patients is our priority. By working together across stakeholders to progress a shift towards prevention rather than just restorative treatment of caries, we will be ensuring a healthier future for millions as well as securing greater access to care for excluded patients,” Pitts said.
Mechanism behind oral thrush discovered

By DTI

LONDON, UK/PITTSBURGH, USA: A recently discovered peptide toxin has been identified by a team of UK and US researchers as the cause for the mouth to develop an oral thrush. The substance called Candidalysin, which is produced by the fungus *Candida albicans*, was found to punch a hole into cells lining the mouth thus triggering the immune response, they wrote in a study published by the *Journal of Science Immunology.*

Helper immune cells then attacked the hyphae of the otherwise harmless fungus which results in the painful infection.

“Surprisingly little is known about how fungal immunity in the mouth operates,” said co-senior author Sarah L. Gaffen from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. “And, until now, it was unclear why *Candida* does not establish an invasive infection in healthy humans.”

In their study, the researchers used a combination of human oral epithelial cells cultured in laboratory dishes and mice infected orally with *Candida*, to show the central understanding its role in the infection mechanism in the mouth could eventually lead to better treatments for the condition and other fungal infections, the scientists said. They added that despite millions of fungal infections worldwide, there are no commercially available anti-fungal vaccines yet.

“Our research provides vital clues to understand the immune defence network at barrier sites of the body. This knowledge may ultimately be harnessed to design antifungal vaccines,” Professor Julian Naglik from King’s College London Dental Institute, who discovered the mechanism in the mouth, said. Awarded a large National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, Gaffen and Naglik announced to further explore the role of Candidalysin signalling in oral immunity in the near future.

An oral thrush is one of the most common fungal infections of the mouth. While it is treatable with topical medication, it often causes pain that makes it difficult for patients to eat or swallow. It is also believed to be responsible for other serious fungal infections, especially in infants and other patients with a compromised immune system such as HIV/AIDS patients, denture wearers and those on immunosuppressants, including chemotherapy and drugs to prevent the rejection of transplanted organs.

The paper, titled “Oral epithelial cells orchestrate innate Type 17 responses to *Candida albicans* through the virulence factor *Candidalysin*” was published in *Science Immunology* on 3 November.

Tooth found in Dorset traces human lineage to rat-like creature

By DTI

PORTSMOUTH, UK: According to new research from the University of Portsmouth in England, fossils from the oldest mammals belonging to the line that led to human beings have been discovered on the Jurassic Coast of Dorset in the UK. The two teeth are from small, rat-like creatures that lived 145 million years ago in the shadow of the dinosaurs. The animals are reportedly the ancestors of almost all mammals alive today.

The discovery of the teeth was made by University of Portsmouth undergraduate student Grant Smith. Dr Steve Sweetman, a research fellow at the University of Portsmouth and the study’s lead author, said: “Grant was sifting through small samples of earliest Cretaceous rocks collected on the coast of Dorset as part of his undergraduate dissertation project in the hope of finding some interesting remains. Quite unexpectedly, he found not one but two quite remarkable teeth of a type never before seen from rocks of this age. I was asked to look at them and give an opinion and even at first glance my jaw dropped.”

The teeth were recovered from rocks exposed in cliffs near Swanage, which has given up thousands of iconic fossils. “The teeth are of a type so highly evolved that I realised straight away I was looking at remains of Early Cretaceous mammals that more closely resembled those that lived during the latest Cretaceous—some 66 million years later in geological history. In the world of palaeontology there has been a lot of debate around a specimen found in China, which is approximately 150 million years old. This was originally said to be of the same type as ours but recent studies have ruled this out. That being the case, our 145-million-year-old teeth are undoubtedly the earliest yet known from the line of mammals that lead to our own species,” said Sweetman.

Sweetman believes the mammals were small, furry creatures and most likely nocturnal. One, a possible burrower, probably ate insects and the larger may have eaten plants as well. Noting that the teeth are of a highly advanced type that can pierce, cut and crush food Sweetman said, “They are also very worn which suggests the animals to which they belonged lived to a good age for their species. No mean feat when you’re sharing your habitat with predatory dinosaurs.”

The paper, titled “Highly derived eutherian mammals from the earliest Cretaceous of southern Britain”, was published in the *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica* journal on 7 November.

New survey reveals how often Brits skip toothbrushing

By DTI

LONDON, UK: Only two-thirds of British people brush their teeth the recommended two times a day, a new survey has found. The remaining third only use their toothbrush once a day and primarily in the morning, while 18 per cent of the respondents said they brush only once per day, with 15 per cent of these respondents said they skip their morning brushing altogether. Furthermore, it appears the vast majority of Brits do not floss, since only one-third of all those surveyed responded that they make daily use of this interdental cleaner.

Men, especially, do not seem to be keen on cleaning their teeth, as one in three reported only brushing them once per day. However, with only 26 per cent who said they skip a second brush regularly, women were found to have slightly better oral hygiene practices.

The survey, the results of which were released this week, was conducted on behalf of YouGov UK and involved over 2,000 adults from across the UK, representing all the respective age groups and social grades. Those in the C, D and E groups (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, state pensioners, casual and lowest-grade workers, unemployed people with state benefits only) were found to brush less frequently than their middle-class counterparts, and those aged between 25 and 34 appeared to be less concerned about their oral healthcare routine than those outside this age group.

Brits skip toothbrushing
EuroPerio and Dental Tribune International renew collaboration

By DTI

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands/LEIPZIG, Germany: With thousands of dental professionals expected from around the world, EuroPerio9 is set to be one of the largest and most influential dental meetings next year. The event’s organiser and Dental Tribune International (DTI) have now announced that they will again be collaborating for the 2018 edition, which is to be held in Amsterdam in June.

The organisations first worked together for EuroPerio8, which was held in London in the UK in 2015. For 2018, DTI will again produce a special edition of its show newspaper title today international on each of the three days of the event. In addition, DTI editors will provide daily coverage on EuroPerio9 from the Amsterdam RAI Exhibition and Convention Centre on its news website and social media channels.

With its congress newspaper, DTI already provides daily news on all significant global dental congresses and exhibitions, including the International Dental Show in Germany, the FDI World Dental Congress and the Annual Scientific Meeting of the European Association for Osseointegration.

First held in Paris in France in 1994, EuroPerio is organised every three years by the European Federation of Periodontology, a professional body representing over 30 organisations, with 14,000 members, worldwide. The last edition saw a record attendance of 10,000 visitors, including some of the most high-profile experts and scientists in the field.

For the upcoming edition in Amsterdam, the organiser is anticipating a similar number. Highlights will include a live surgery as part of the Master Clinician/Perio-dental Specialist Forum and a number of sessions aimed at the various members of the dental team. The scientific programme will be accompanied by a large trade exhibition, which will feature the latest innovations from leaders in the field, such as CURAPROX, EMS and Philips.

‘I think that the combination of the location, the scientific programme and our marketing strategies will create a very interesting meeting,’ congress chair Dr Michele Reners commented. ‘Even with such a large attendance, everybody can have the benefit of and experience EuroPerio in a positive way.’

More information about the event can be found on the official website, www.efp.org/europerio9.

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...THAN MEETS THE EYE

VISIT: WWW.THEDENTISTRYSHOW.CO.UK
“We are now putting the mouth back in the body”
An interview with paediatric dentistry consultant Dr Claire Stevens, Manchester

The nationwide Dental Check by One (DCby1) campaign aims to combat dental caries in British children by spreading awareness that dental check-ups should be performed even before a child’s first tooth appears. At the BDIA Dental Showcase in Birmingham, Dental Tribune spoke with Dr Claire Stevens, president of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry and a consultant in paediatric dentistry at the University Dental Hospital of Manchester, about the programme.

While the oral health status of children seems to have improved in the UK in recent years, there are still record numbers of children presenting to hospitals to have their teeth extracted. How can this be explained?

The high number of general admissions for multiple extractions in children isn’t new. Current figures are taken from the Hospital Episode Statistics [data warehouse containing details of all admissions, outpatient appointments, and accident and emergency attendances at NHS hospitals in England] gathered by NHS Digital and are probably more accurate than ever before owing to vastly improved data collection.

When compared with previous methods of data collection, we think it’s likely, in fact, that general admissions are starting to go down.

Sadly, there are communities in which children are not taken to the dentist and there is a high level of unmet need, reflecting societal inequalities. This is one of the most challenging aspects we face as a society.

With £50.5 million spent annually on dental extractions in 0- to 19-year-olds on a disease that is nearly always preventable, downwards is the only way for these statistics to go.

Speaking at the British Dental Association conference in May this year, I spoke publicly of DCby1 for the first time. A new statistic had just emerged and this was that only 19 per cent of 0- to 2-year-olds in the UK had seen a dentist by the age of 2. I challenged my audience to see four extra children under 2 if every dentist took up the challenge, the number of children seeing a dentist before their second birthday would go up by 10 per cent. The campaign had its formal national launch at the BSPD conference in September.

The programme encourages parents and caregivers to take children to the dentist before they have reached their first birthday. What is the evidence regarding the benefits of seeing a child at that early age?

We know that an unacceptable number of children as young as 2 or 3 are suffering from early childhood caries. We also know that one in eight 3-year-olds has caries, so leaving interventions until school age is too late. The only way to change this is by getting in early with preventative advice. We know that a good diet and regular brushing with fluoride toothpaste can prevent dental disease.

Why do you think such a campaign is necessary?

We need a radical approach to bring about change. However, we are undertaking the campaign progressively. We are building awareness by reaching out to parents through health visitors, school and nursery nurses, doctors and pharmacists.

In other European countries, like Germany or France, it is common to have children see a dentist before they even reach the age of 1. Why is the UK still behind in this regard?

Somewhere in this country, we have not placed a high enough value on oral health. I am glad to say that we are now putting the mouth back in the body.

What organisations are supporting the campaign and how?

We have had the most fantastic support across dentistry and healthcare generally. Countless organisations are getting on board with sharing the very simple DCby1 message. If parents hear this wherever they go, they will feel empowered to ask for a dental check and this will become the norm. We are making this issue everyone’s business, and we are glad to be seeing such a positive response.

What feedback did you receive after the launch of the campaign, and what do dentists have to do to join in?

Last week, I curated the @NHS Twitter handle and I took the opportunity to broadcast the DCby1 message. A typical response was the following from a mother: “Thank you for your tweets. Taking my 16-month-old to the dentist for her first appointment on Monday because of it.”

Support from the profession has also been heartening. Joining in is simple. All the information a dental practice needs is on the BSPD website.

Do you think that celebrities, such as Jamie Oliver, who publicly lobby for a sugar tax are creating more awareness around topics like diet and sugar intake and therefore maybe even have a positive influence on children and parents?

Definitely, yes. We live in a culture in which celebrities play an important role, and probably more than any other celebrity, Jamie Oliver has had a positive influence on healthy eating. He is also a parent, so his impact can be felt in schools and in homes. If Jamie was reading this, I am sure he too would be sharing the DCby1 message.

Thank you very much for this interview.