UK’s first private dental school to open in Leicester

LEICESTER, UK: The United Kingdom’s first independent dental school—aimed mainly at international students—is soon to open in Leicester. From September 2013, the school will enrol 100 students annually for a five-year degree course.

The Dental Clinical Centre will make a significant contribution to the dental health of the local population, which is below average. The new venture is a partnership between the Leicester Dental Teaching Academy and the University of Buckingham. The Bachelor’s degree in Dental Surgery to be offered will be conferred by the University of Buckingham. The course is designed to meet General Dental Council outcome measures and European standards, as well as the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The degree course is specially designed to appeal to an international market. Students will be introduced to patient care early on in their training and will be given a thorough grounding in business development, management and enterprise. They will gain an appreciation of the international business environment and cultures in other parts of the world, such as India, Nigeria and China, as well as the impact of oral disease on societies around the world.

Once the school is up and running, it is planned to establish a charitable trust and to engage in research, as well as to award bursaries to promising students with limited means of support. (Edited by Daniel Zimmermann, DTI)

DTI
The Fluoride Action Network (FAN) has criticised the authors of an article recently published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* for urging dentists to promote fluoridation even though many of them are not well informed about the issue.

In their article, Drs Molly L.R. Melbye, a senior research fellow at the Department of Oral Health Sciences, University of Washington, and Jason M. Armfield, senior research fellow at the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health, University of Adelaide, state that “Studies of dentists’ attitudes about water fluoridation suggest that a lack of knowledge and preparedness are barriers to discussing the topic.” In a survey, more than half of the respondents believed they needed more information and training on the issue, the authors wrote.

According to FAN, in the same article, the authors urge dentists to promote fluoridation, despite their lack of knowledge.

“It is reckless to urge dentists to tell the public that fluoridation is safe when they are not on top of the literature,” stated FAN director Dr Paul Connett. “Their qualifications pertain to teeth. They are not qualified to assess what damage ingesting fluoride may cause to the rest of the body.”

According to FAN, Armfield and Melbye encourage dentists to promote the safety of fluoridation based upon this misleading assurance: “There are no known harmful effects from ingestion of water that has had fluoride added to it at or about 0.7–1.2 mg/l. No systematic reviews of the literature have shown any negative health effects from ingestion of water fluoridated in or near this therapeutic range.”

Connett said that this assertion is dangerously misleading because it confuses concentration and dose. Harm has been found at doses that are commonly experienced in populations drinking artificially fluoridated water. Furthermore, it ignores that most basic health studies have not been conducted in countries that practice fluoridation. The absence of research is not the same as absence of harm, he stated.

According to Connett, the assertion also overlooks the serious findings reported by the US National Research Council in 2006 that subsets of the population—including bottle-fed infants—are exceeding the US Environmental Protection Agency’s safe reference dose (0.06 mg/kg of bodyweight per day) by drinking fluoridated water.

Fluoridation is still a subject of controversial public debate, as some believe it can only benefit oral health and some think it has a negative impact.

FAN is calling nations that still fluoridate their water to end the practice. According to the international organisation, “it is becoming increasingly clear that fluoridating water supplies is an outdated, unnecessary, and dangerous relic from a 1950s public health culture that viewed mass distribution of chemicals much differently than scientists do today.”

The article, titled “The Dentist’s Role in Promoting Community Water Fluoridation: A Call to Action for Dentists and Educators,” was published in the January issue of the *Journal of the American Dental Association* which is published in Chicago.