Australia regulates distribution of tooth-whitening products

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Canberra, Australia: From May 2015, tooth-whitening products with high concentrations of active ingredients may only be sold to customers by registered dental practitioners as part of their dental practice in Australia. Over-the-counter sales of these products will be limited to products containing 6% or less hydrogen peroxide and/or 18% or less carbamide peroxide, a new amendment to the country’s Poisons Standard states.

These regulatory changes by the government are the result of a recent proposal by the Australian Dental Industry Association that the decision to supply patients with higher-strength tooth-whitening products rest with dentists. Prior to that, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission had repeatedly called on the government to restrict direct sales of these products in retail stores and online owing to a number of recalls of DIY tooth-whitening products believed to be unsafe for home use in the past.

“This is a sensible decision that enables appropriate patient access to tooth-whitening products and puts in place appropriate measures to ensure patient safety,” said Troy Williams, Chief Executive Officer of the ADA. “It ends the confusion that has existed over which tooth-whitening products may be sold in Australia.” Dentists too have praised the new regulation as a step towards better patient safety.

Up until now, the market for tooth-whitening products has seen a boom in recent years, with plenty of DIY products containing high levels of hydrogen and carbamide peroxide being launched onto the market, according to industry experts. As part of an increasing demand for cosmetic procedures, the market for tooth-whitening has seen a boom in recent years, with more than 700 tooth-whitening salons available.

Positive effects confirmed

Researchers from the University of Adelaide’s School of Dentistry have found new evidence that fluoride in drinking water is effective in preventing tooth decay.

In the largest population-based study to date using data obtained from the 2004–2006 Australian National Survey of Adult Oral Health, they found that the substance provides dental health benefits to adults, particularly those who have been exposed to fluoride for most of their lives.

Among other findings, they reported that adults who were exposed to fluoridated water for more than 75 per cent of their life had 50 per cent less tooth decay than those exposed for less than 25 per cent of lifetime.

Better outlook for consumables market

A new report from the US has predicted the worldwide market for oral care products & dental consumables to exceed US$17.46 billion by 2016, a volume comparable to the current gross domestic product of the Nation of Brunei. The report published by Markets and Markets included products such as biomaterials, prostheses, endodontic, orthodontic and periodontic products, as well as restoratives, alloys, cements, bonding agents, impression materials, preventive products, disposables, and other products.

The new figures significantly differ from earlier predictions that estimated the market value to reach only US$14–15 billion in the same period. The reasons for this increase are the rising awareness in developing nations about oral hygiene as well as new product developments in the consumables sector, the report states. Higher income levels and insurance coverage in emerging markets like India and China are also expected to contribute significantly to the growth of the market.