Bugs threaten health of orthodontic patients
One in two retainers found to host array of harmful bacteria

Daniel Zimmermann

LONDON, UK/LEIPZIG, Germany: Orthodontic retainers are a potential source of harmful microbes if not properly cleaned, scientists in the UK have warned. In a series of tests conducted at the UCL Eastman Dental Institute in London at least 50 per cent of all tested retainers contained species of Candida and Staphylococcus micro-organisms, including MRSA, a multidrug-resistant bacterium that can be fatal to patients with a compromised immune system.

The Candida yeast, found universally on human skin and other areas, can also cause infections. Amongst other conditions, it has been associated with oral candidiasis, a condition often related to ill-fitting dentures. Both species do not normally occur in the oral cavity.

The researchers said that the high number of harmful bacteria found in retainers is most likely the result of poor cleaning, allowing microbes to build up a resistant biofilm and spread to other areas of the oral cavity such as interior cheeks and tongue. The potential for transmission is also high, as retainers are frequently removed and replaced in the mouth by the person who uses it, they added.

They recommend wearers wash their hands thoroughly before and after inserting their retainers.

Proper dental hygiene through tooth brushing and the use of mouthwash also helps to keep harmful bacteria from entering the mouth.

WHO takes on influenza threat

From news sources

GENEVA, Switzerland/LEIPZIG, Germany: Members of a working group set up by the World Health Organization have agreed upon an international framework to improve preparedness for influenza pandemics that threaten public health worldwide. The agreement, which is expected to provide clear legal regimes and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in the prevention and management of pandemics, is the result of more than three years of negotiations. It is expected to be ratified during the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in May.

According to a joint statement, one of the key elements of the agreement will be improved cooperation and exchange of information between key players such as the WHO, national laboratories and pharmaceutical manufacturers. Access to life-saving vaccines and other resources for low-income countries, which often cannot produce or afford the required anti-viral medication for their population, is also supposed to be improved.

“This agreement promotes global health security and solidarity in pandemic times,” said Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen, who also chairs the working group. “It also reflects a unique partnership with industry and contains concrete measures of cooperation with both industry and civil society.”

Owing to increasing global transportation, locally active influenza viruses exhibit an increasing potential to become global pandemics, placing many at risk, especially medical and dental professionals. According to the latest estimates from the WHO, the H1N1 virus or swine flu that first occurred in Mexico has killed almost 20,000 people worldwide.
**Periodontal treatment no harm to newborns**

From news reports, SAINT PAUL, USA/LEIPZIG, Germany: Pregnant women with gum disease may undergo non-surgical periodontal treatment without fear of consequences for their baby’s health. In a large trial involving 400 infants between the ages of two and three from different pediatric clinics in the US, dental clinicians found that treating periodontitis during pregnancy did not affect the children’s cognitive, motor or language capabilities later in life.

In the study, clinicians from universities in Minnesota, Kentucky, Mississippi and New York compared development data of children born to women who were treated for gum disease before and after their deliveries. However, the results between the control and experimental groups only differed slightly. Higher motor and cognitive scores were observed in the children of women who saw an improvement in their periodontal health.

Earlier studies indicated that maternal periodontal treatment may be linked to different medical problems including low birth weight, preterm birth and long-term development delays, as bacteria released during treatment may enter the mother’s bloodstream and harm the baby. According to research, pregnant women are prone to gingival bleeding, which is caused by a hormonal imbalance that encourages the growth of certain oral bacteria.

If the new data is verified, pregnant women throughout the US could have their gum conditions treated, confident in the knowledge that it will not have a clinically significant effect on their child’s development, the researchers said. A spokesperson of the American Academy of Periodontology said that although the data remains inconclusive, the organisation generally recommends women to maintain their periodontal health during pregnancy.

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**Renewal of Brunei agreement**

Lisa Torrnbäck  
DT UK

LONDON, UK: King’s College London Dental Institute can look forward to three more years of collaboration aimed at the development of the dental workforce in Brunei Darussalam after the renewal of the agreement with the Government of Brunei.

Professor Stephen Dunne, Head of Dental Practice & Policy at the Dental Institute, and Mrs Mabel Slater, Head of Dental Care Professionals Centre for Education and Learning, will take this collaboration forward. In welcoming the news of the signing of the renewal of the agreement, Professor Dunne said: “I am delighted that we are continuing this highly successful collaboration. It is a great pleasure to work with Ministers and colleagues in Brunei Darussalam. Much has been achieved during the past three years, in particular, the establishment of a Brunei Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy Programme.”

“In addition, foundations have been laid for other areas of workforce development, including Dental Technology and a Dental Hygiene Therapy Version Programme,” he added. “Discussions are also underway to establish a National Survey of Oral Health Brunei Darussalam to fully inform dental workforce requirements for the future. Thus, I am confident that the next three years of our collaboration will be just as successful as the last.”

In the meantime, discussions led by the Dean continue with the University of Brunei Darussalam in respect of the possibility of collaboration in respect of BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) training.

According to the Brunei Ministry of Health, the country’s dental service is facing a serious shortage of staff as only 28 dental officers serve the total population of 581,000 people under the Primary Oral Health Care Scheme. There is also a low number of local graduates as well as foreign dentists with suitable qualifications for the post of Dental Officer.