Health experts go cuckoo over mental patients

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HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: People with psychiatric disorders are more likely to suffer from dental diseases than people who are mentally stable, a new report from Australia suggests. Having reviewed over 20 studies from Europe, Asia and the US, researchers from the University of Queensland (UQ) found that patients diagnosed with severe mental illnesses had a three-fold higher risk of losing all their teeth.

Mental patients also had significantly more decayed, filled or missing teeth, the study shows. Levels of dental disease however were lower in countries or regions with water fluoridation.

The alarming figures were released on the same day that new findings from Germany revealed that almost 40 per cent of Europeans suffer from some kind of mental health problem. According to the study, treating disorders like anxiety, insomnia or depression costs the Union an estimated US$594 billion a year, including costs for dental treatment.

Besides their neglect of oral hygiene, mental patients often lack access to oral health care owing to dental phobia and treatment-related costs, UQ professor and lead researcher Steve Kisely said. He added that medication commonly used to treat disorders, such as antidepressants or mood stabilisers, can additionally reduce saliva flow, which can cause xerostomia and increase plaque formation in these patients.

“Patients with severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia, dementia or bipolar disorders are most affected by bad oral health,” he told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific.

Conversely, Kisely said that dental diseases can lead to mental disorders like social phobia caused by the poor anaesthetic appearance of teeth or other symptoms, like bad breath.

He recommended including oral health check-lists in the standard assessment of psychiatric patients and increasing promotion of oral hygiene measures amongst this group. “They should be given advice on diet, smoking and brushing technique,” he concluded.

According to a study, more attention should be given to the oral health status of mentally disabled. (DTI/Photo Refat Mamutov)

New light on oral leucoplakia

Chemical luminescence can aid in the visualisation of oral leucoplakia, new research has found. Following oral examinations, researchers at King’s College London Dental Institute evaluated the accuracy of chemo-luminescence in detecting potentially malignant oral disorders using a commercially available detection kit.

Surveying damage caused by the earthquake/tsunami in Japan. In an exclusive interview, AmeriCares’ Ella Gudwin talks about restoring dental care facilities. (DTI/Photo AmeriCares/Tammy Allen, USA)

Fiji has eyes on people’s oral health

A new oral health survey is being conducted by the Fiji Ministry of Health to re-evaluate the prevalence of dental diseases on the island. Over the next few weeks, dental checks will be conducted on and questionnaires distributed to 6,000 individuals from different parts of the country in collaboration with the Fiji National University in the capital Suva, the ministry said.

The last two surveys, done in 1998 and 2004, revealed that dental diseases like caries and periodontal disease plague the majority of Fijians, especially young children and adolescents. It also found that one in ten adults had decayed, missing or filled teeth. According to the ministry, the initial results of the new survey are expected to be released early next year.

Managing bone with Acteon

The Thailand subsidiary of French dental manufacturer Acteon has announced to hold a seminar and workshop on the issue of bone management next January in Bangkok, Thailand. The seminar will be joined by Drs Fred Bergmann and Saralit Visuttiwat-Tanakorn as well as Prof. Funibaka Watanabe and Lars Sennherby.

New choice for posterior restorations

The best choice for posterior restorations

A dentist appointment is often allowed to wait for months or even years to get a dentist appointment. (DTI/Photo Refat Mamutov)

Australia sets up dental council

Dental experts have been gathered by the Australian coalition to form a new advisory body on oral health. The National Advisory Council on Dental Health, which includes the President of the Australian Dental Association, as well as heads of other national oral health organisations, is intended to develop strategies to improve the country’s poor public dental care system.

The decision to set up the council follows an agreement on the improvement of public dental services signed by Labor and the Green party during last year’s federal elections. Both coalition partners already clashed over the issue in early May, which resulted in additional funding of AU$55 million (US$66 million) for dental care by the government over the next four years.

Public dental services, especially in South Australia, are poor, with patients having to wait for months or even years to get a dentist appointment.

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